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ABSTRACT

This document is one of three monographs resulting from a three-year study of adult counseling programs and practices in the United States. The first section of this monograph describes issues and potential problems associated with four frequently-experienced adult life transitions, i.e., divorce, midlife career change, preretirement planning, and leisure. For each area, three field-tested activities that counselors can adopt or adapt for use in their work settings are included. The second section provides an overview of adult development and adult counseling. Generalizations are presented regarding both the adult experience and appropriate adult counseling behaviors. For each concept, implications for the adult counseling profession are included. A brief summation of adult counseling is followed by extensive resource lists for the four selected life transitions and for the adult experience in general to offer more in-depth reading and practical counseling materials. (Author/NRB)

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Enhancing the Adult Experience: Counseling Approaches and Activities

by

Libby Benjamin and Garry R. Walz

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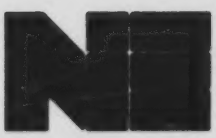

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

This monograph is the latest in a long line of collaborative ventures by Benjamin and Walz. Libby, a Westerner by upbringing and education (M.A. from San Jose State University and Ph.D. from Oregon State University), joined the ERIC Counseling and Personnel Services Clearinghouse at The University of Michigan in 1974 as Associate Director of User Services. Previous to that time she was a teacher and counselor in public schools and served as a counselor educator, member of the counseling staff, and Admissions Counselor at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. She also was active in counseling associations in California, President of the Alaska Personnel and Guidance Association (ASPGA), and Treasurer of the Western Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (WACES).

Garry is Professor of Education and Director of ERIC/CAPS at The University of Michigan. A native of Minnesota (M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota), he has directed the Clearinghouse since he founded it in 1967. He has held many professional offices and leadership positions, including President of the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA, 1971-72), President of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES, 1966-67), and Chairman of North Central ACES (1965).

Benjamin and Walz are perhaps best known for the Life Career Development System, a comprehensive program designed to teach life skills; for development of a number of competency-based staff development training modules; and for presentations and workshops throughout the United States and in several foreign countries on career development, stress, adult development, and change.

FOREWORD

In 1979 we embarked upon a three-year study of adult counseling programs and practices in this country. Immersing ourselves in the literature on adulthood, visiting countless adult counseling centers, and consulting with adult counselors from Florida to Oregon, we developed insights and inferences regarding the adult experience. Three monographs have resulted from our activities. The first, *Counseling Adults for Life Transitions*, describes the transitional process and identifies major life transitions which are predictable events in the lives of most adults. *Programs and Practices in Adult Counseling*, the second monograph, synthesizes what we learned about adult counseling programs in action and suggests guidelines for adult counseling program development. In this, our third publication, we attempt to put the three years into perspective and to provide an experiential map that illuminates the significant signposts of our journey.

LB and GRW

ENHANCING THE ADULT EXPERIENCE: COUNSELING APPROACHES AND ACTIVITIES

Libby Benjamin and Garry R. Walz

This monograph has three major sections. The first describes issues and potential problems associated with four frequently-experienced adult life transitions and includes for each area three field-tested activities that counselors can adopt or adapt for immediate use in their own work settings. The second consists of "cognitive leaps," generalizations regarding both the adult experience and appropriate adult counseling behaviors. Moving beyond inference, the authors also discuss the implications of their thinking for the adult counseling profession. The final section contains extensive resource lists for the four selected life transitions and for the adult experience in general that provide more in-depth reading and practical counseling materials for interested readers. The intent throughout is to buttress theory with practical applications and to offer the counseling readership information and strategies that will be useful to them in their work with adult clients.

INTRODUCTION

Why do we talk about improving adult counseling strategies when the future of adult counseling is so uncertain? As the need for adult counselors and the evidence of their effectiveness grows, available support appears to be decreasing for all of the human services, a situation which has dispirited helping professionals. Our own experience over the past several years gives us hope, present funding problems notwithstanding, that the future for adult counseling is promising. Financial retrenchment should be a time for intellectual ferment and innovation--for sorting out essential from nonessential counseling functions, identifying the most promising practices, and distilling what we know about adult counseling into the most succinct and cogent terms possible. When the financial storm has abated and the dark clouds have given way to a rainbow of opportunities, we will then be ready with ideas and plans.

In this monograph we have worked to synthesize the available knowledge about adult counseling and interpret it from the perspectives gained through visitations to and analyses of adult counseling programs. We have chosen as our first target four adult transitions which possess great significance for the adult experience--divorce, midlife career change, preretirement planning, and leisure. In each of these we have combined extant knowledge with our own priorities and values. Believing that even the most captivating ideas will remain "shelf items" unless there is a direct, practical way to implement them, we have included with the discussion three field-tested counselor activities designed to promote the concepts and goals for that major adult transition. The activities provide counselors with examples of ways they can intervene to help clients manage critical life transitions more effectively. Using the activities will also prod counselors to sharpen their basic conceptions regarding a particular transition and to formulate additional counseling approaches.

While the first section draws a bead on four critical life events, the second broadens the target to include adult development and adult counseling in general. Here we bring together--"Our best hunch is . . .," "I believe . . .," "Our experience would strongly suggest . . .," and present these ideas as "cognitive leaps"--observations on those aspects of adult counseling which strike us as distinguishably significant. We also attach a "counseling implications" section to each concept discussed to emphasize the importance of linking substantive ideas with effective counselor practices.

If the first and second sections whet a counselor's appetite, the third section serves up a full four-course meal of resources for each of the four transitional areas we discuss, plus a dessert of references on the adult experience. Most of these are available from the ERIC system, which contains a rich vein of inexpensive and readily retrievable materials that can be utilized in many facets of adult counseling. In a final few paragraphs at the conclusion of the volume, we articulate our summation of adult counseling--from whence we have come and whither we should go.

Throughout our writing, we have unabashedly worked to blend superior adult counseling concepts with targeted, effective counselor practices. As the popular refrain goes, "Love and marriage go together like a horse and a carriage--you can't have one without the other." We take the posture that effective adult counseling cannot have one without the other, and that what we call counseling impact can only be achieved through the harmonious fusion of concept and practice.

MAJOR ADULT LIFE TRANSITIONS

> *The central and unchanging goal of the mature and integrated self is to chart its own course, to choose its own direction.* (Stringer, 1971, pp. 81-82)

The work of the adult counselor is both broad and specific. It may involve helping an individual to lay out a comprehensive life career plan or providing a person with detailed information regarding a specific decision. A central core of the adult counselor's work is assisting clients to cope with major life transitions, changes that are predictable for most adults and that many will have difficulty managing.

In this section we discuss four major life transitions that counselors report are among the most significant for their adult clients. Three of these critical life events--divorce, midlife career change, and impending retirement--are the subject of much popular media discussion because they will impact upon a broad segment if not the majority of the adult population. Assisting clients to prepare themselves for a transition or helping those in the throes of major change are ways that counselors can be genuinely helpful to adults. The fourth area, leisure, represents a more generic transition involving changes in attitudes and values away from the traditional work ethic and toward appreciation and understanding of the importance of leisure in achieving life satisfaction and self-fulfillment. An area worthy of attention for all adults, development of rewarding leisure pursuits also has special meaning for individuals experiencing other kinds of life transitions.

Adults experience transitions in ways unique to their own personalities and modes of behaving. Counselors can provide valuable aid to adults as they attempt to wrestle with and resolve the challenges of a particular life change. But counselors will have far more positive impact on each individual's life functioning if they can move a step farther--helping clients to expand their awareness of the transitional process and acquire coping skills that will serve them well in managing future critical life

events. Adult counselors thus have a dual task: to become as informed as possible about the characteristics of frequently occurring transitions and to learn all they can about effective management of the transitional process itself. We hope that our discussion of these four common adult transitions will broaden counselors' understanding of the issues and potential difficulties associated with each. We hope also that it will enlighten counselors regarding the dynamics of change and its likely impact on unprepared adults, and provide useful tools by which counselors can assist adult clients to increase personal power and control over their lives.

Divorce Counseling

Being born is a frightening and overwhelming experience. Getting divorced can be like being reborn. It may frighten you at first. But it is not so much an end of something as a beginning.

S. Gettleman & J. Markowitz
The Courage to Divorce (1974)

Introduction

Even though many couples today join forces without legal sanction, marriage continues to be the most preferred arrangement for living together. This, despite the fact that divorce statistics are skyrocketing and the chances of a couple's having a lifelong marriage are now only about 50% (and even less in large urban centers). If current divorce trends continue, that statistic will probably plunge even lower.

Until just a few years ago, divorce was considered to be a skeleton in the closet, something not to be discussed, a cause for shame. Practically everyone today, however, has either had firsthand experience with divorce or knows someone who has, and this, coupled with the recent proliferation of books and articles on the topic, is bringing divorce out into the open. Because it is such a common experience in American culture, divorce is also commanding increasing attention from interested sociologists, psychologists, and counselors. Recent research and the development of tested models for delivering services to divorcing individuals are helping to lift the veil of professional ignorance about the subject. We are beginning to learn more about causal factors and effects of divorce, typical emotional patterns of response in divorcing persons, and appropriate therapeutic interventions by those who would lend assistance.

The need for services during divorce is well-documented by self-reports, recent research, and national statistics. Hetherington and others (1976), for example, found that divorcing persons feel more

anxious, depressed, angry, rejected, and incompetent during and immediately following the experience than do those from intact relationships. Other researchers (Carter & Glick, 1976) point out the high rates of accidental death and suicide among divorced as compared with married persons. Crisis-line counselors report that over 80% of their hotline calls have to do with the dissolution of a relationship (Kessler, undated). And here we have a paradox. Graduate training for counselors is concerned primarily with socially acceptable human needs--enhancement of communication skills, assistance in self-exploration, career guidance, help with decision-making and goal-setting--when unhappy divorced individuals, anguished single parents, and troubled children of divorce are hungry for help. Some psychologists and religious counselors abandon individuals when the decision to divorce is made, feeling perhaps that they have failed and their assistance is no longer required when the marriage disintegrates. It is as if to teach divorce counseling or to offer divorce counseling services is *"tantamount to saying that divorce is as valid and as moral an alternative to marital conflict as conciliation"* (Hunt, 1967, p. 15), an equivalence which of course counters our cherished beliefs about the sanctity of marriage.

As the myths and stereotypes surrounding divorce are evaporating, divorce counseling services in various legal, psychological, religious, and social institutions are increasing. Divorcing persons can now obtain help from a variety of sources. We are at last recognizing divorce counseling as a legitimate professional field of endeavor. We are finally coming to see that divorce does not have to be equated with failure, that often it is a positive solution to an unsatisfactory situation, that divorcing persons may indeed be exhibiting the much-admired qualities of strength, thoughtful judgment, assertiveness, and risk-taking.

Major Areas of Client Concern

The concerns of divorcing individuals can be divided roughly into two areas: (1) very practical issues having to do with financial security and division of assets, and (2) social and emotional needs.

Practical/financial issues. One of the most common problems of divorced persons is money--many report that they worry about money most or all of the time. Dissolving one household into two puts a strain on practically any budget, even when both spouses are working. Nonpayment of child support seems to be a major complaint for the custodial parent (usually the female), and enforcement proves to be very expensive or even futile when the noncustodial parent either has a low-paying job or simply disappears.

Ignorance of grounds for divorce in a particular state and of how settlements are made is typical of divorcing individuals. Many clients wish to avoid the expense, the chance of postponement, and the combative atmosphere of the courtroom but don't know how to do it. Trained mediators are now available in some cities to help couples settle disputes over division of money or property, child custody, and visitation rights. The mediator, as a neutral third party, sits down with the couple and helps them negotiate their areas of conflict fairly and rationally. Some states also have what are called Conciliation Courts, programs funded by local communities, or county, state, or sometimes Federal agencies, that offer mediation and counseling services to clients.

In order to help clients resolve the practical issues of separation, counselors should have a wide knowledge of family law in their state and of the various agencies or organizations that offer these support services.

Social/emotional issues. As the process of divorce unfolds, individuals typically experience a wide range of emotions, including negative feelings of disappointment, anger, apathy, fear, grief, guilt, self-recrimination, and loss of self-worth, as well as positive feelings of freedom and anticipation--and wide swings between. Historically society has adopted a punitive stance toward divorce in both laws and attitudes. In recent years laws in most states have changed dramatically to broaden the grounds for divorce and to reduce the length of time required to obtain a divorce, but emotional intolerance still exists. The use of such terms as "broken home" or "the rupture of a marriage" and the

exclusion of the divorced person from social activities in a coupled community add to the already heavy pressures on those experiencing divorce.

Most of us marry with every hope and expectation that the union will be permanent; we promise to join together until parted by death. To break that vow means that we have failed, that somehow we are less. Divorcing then becomes a time of intense self-examination, usually to our detriment, and requires a restructuring of the self, not only as a single person but as a self-sufficient, competent, worthy single person. Many individuals need help in accomplishing this transition, in sorting through their feelings, in learning new behaviors that will help them grow from the experience.

Counselors can provide the needed tools for growth by helping divorcing or divorced individuals find emotional release, explore and correct their own perhaps faulty assumptions and self-defeating behaviors, and acquire new or polish up rusty social skills. By bringing together a number of clients with similar problems, counselors can create the support network each member needs in the struggle to achieve sound mental health and productive living.

Stages of Divorce

Dr. Sheila Kessler (1975b) has identified seven emotional stages that appear to be typical of persons going through divorce. All people do not experience all of the stages, the stages are not necessarily chronological, and they vary greatly in intensity and the length of time needed to work through them. We briefly describe these emotional stages below to broaden counselors' understanding and to substantiate in greater detail the needs of individuals experiencing divorce. Readers are urged to consult Kessler's book for a far more in-depth discussion of each stage.

1. Disillusionment. This stage occurs when one or both spouses realize that their marriage is not satisfying, that their differences are real and deep. They feel disappointed, frustrated, restless.

2. Erosion. Disappointments surface in the next stage as the partners begin to criticize one another, to undermine each other openly or subtly, to blame the other for their feelings of dissatisfaction, to neglect known needs and wants of the other.

3. Detachment. In this stage emotion is replaced by apathy. The energy to fight or try to correct the poor situation is gone because the feelings are gone. The attitude is now one of "I don't care." What formerly provoked hostility now loses its capacity to engender any response at all. Extramarital affairs are typical of this stage, as are small but significant steps toward dissolution of the relationship such as single bank accounts, job search in another community, plans to take a vacation alone, confiding one's troubles to others.

4. Physical separation. Moving out is perhaps the most dramatic stage because it is the most visible. When this happens, people may feel shock or panic, may experience broad mood swings that often lead to a (mostly temporary) return to the other spouse, may feel the urge to withdraw from everyone, have to face the perhaps harsh reactions of family and friends, and encounter all the problems of trying to work things out financially.

5. Mourning. Even when both spouses realize fully that divorce is the only answer, is indeed the good and right answer, they often experience a profound sense of sadness and loss. That this marriage that started so well and had every potential for success was not successful engenders private feelings of grief. Mourning is a cleansing process that allows individuals to get rid of remaining feelings of guilt or love so as to make room for new experiences. Anger sometimes helps to purge the old feelings as people bring unpleasant realities to light and voice their lingering resentments or hurts.

6. Second adolescence. Once the most difficult problems of physical separation and mourning are worked through, the newly-single individual often feels "like a kid." Freedom from former constraints may lead to excesses in behavior as people test their new limits. A new love or

a new hobby or freedom to travel can cause people to feel as excitable and vulnerable and questioning as they did in their youth. Many adopt new behaviors, new friends, while others come to have a new and deeper appreciation for their own deep-rooted values and the loyalty of former associates.

7. Hard work. The transition is now complete and the hard work on making a new life begins. People have conquered the negative emotional consequences of divorce. They begin to set new goals appropriate to their changed status and often feel a new confidence and sense of mastery over what they can be or do.

What we call divorce counseling really begins at Stage 4 when the couple has actually separated. Up to that time the spouses are still unsure about their commitment to the marriage and professional interventions are directed at helping them deal openly with and resolve their conflicts (i.e., marriage counseling). Most divorce counseling occurs with just one individual from the former partnership, the purpose being to help the person rebuild emotional autonomy, regain a sense of identity in the changed role, and move into a new kind of life with equanimity and strength.

Program Considerations

Because creating a support structure is one of the major goals of a divorce counseling program, the group format is by far the most effective way of providing services. Experience suggests that the group should number between ten and fifteen persons--small enough for each member to share personal concerns with and receive help from the others, large enough for the exchange of a variety of ideas and points of view. Having members of both sexes is helpful, as is a blend of different ages and stages in the divorce process. Former spouses should not be in the same group because, as we have said before, establishing a new identity and developing autonomy as a single person is a primary goal of divorce counseling.

Admission to the group requires that members be separated from their spouses and be somewhere in the divorce process. That is, the concerns of people who are still living with their spouses and who have not yet made a firm decision to divorce are far different from those of individuals trying to adjust to divorced status.

Groups usually meet weekly for a predetermined number of weeks, six to eight, and an established period of time, two to three hours. Some flexibility should be provided in the event that the group wishes to contract for additional meetings. Experienced divorce counselors have found it best to balance content between unstructured, client-originated discussion topics and formal skill-building exercises.

Divorce counseling requires a group leader with consummate skill in group process, able to handle emotionally-charged issues with sensitivity and understanding. It is especially important that the leader have clarified his/her own attitudes and values regarding divorce so as to be as nonjudgmental and impartial as possible. Divorce counselors need not have gone through a divorce themselves in order to be effective in their role, but group members invariably ask this question of the leader and seem to gain reassurance in knowing that he/she has experienced pain akin to theirs.

We are speaking here of a group counseling model generally found in an agency setting or conducted by a trained psychologist in private practice. Some universities also provide similar services as extracurricular activities for interested students or optional course choices. Resources that can be extremely helpful to divorce counselors in designing their programs are the film produced by the American Personnel and Guidance Association (1976) entitled "Divorce: Part One," and the guides for leaders and group members produced by Dr. Sheila Kessler (1977a, 1977b). Citations of other excellent materials are found in the Resources section of this publication.

Counseling Activities

In this portion of the chapter we share some specific activities that have proven to be effective in helping divorced individuals profit from group counseling. We hope counselors will feel free to adapt them in any way that seems appropriate for their own particular leadership style and client group. An extensive bibliography of interesting literature on divorce and trainer materials is provided in the Resources section of this monograph.

Ice-Breaker

As individuals meet for the first time, they are naturally tense and anxious about whether they will like and be accepted by other group members, whether they can trust the others, whether the group will be truly helpful to them. Investing themselves in the group and having the courage to share their deepest concerns is mandatory if members are to achieve the greatest gains from the experience--behaviors that are very difficult for many. To help break down these very natural barriers and to begin creating a feeling of cohesion and trust, the group leader can open the first session with an activity in which members can start the sharing process while maintaining feelings of safety.

After the group is assembled, the leader asks members to form pairs and introduce themselves to one another. As part of the introduction they also tell their partner one of the most difficult problems they are experiencing in adjusting to divorce. They are cautioned to share only something that they don't mind others knowing. After the activity is concluded (about ten minutes), each person then introduces his/her partner to the others. In the process each group member has begun to make a new friend and has allowed someone to enter his/her life, if only tentatively. Having had the opportunity to experience the attention of the whole group also makes it much easier the next time anybody wishes to volunteer a comment.

Focusing on Group Needs

Dealing with topics of greatest importance to members is of course a major goal of the divorce counseling process. An excellent way of identifying those areas and of helping individuals clarify and classify their concerns is to create a kind of "needs assessment" of common problems. Using a semantic differential approach, group members check the topics which they find most critical to themselves at the present time. These are then discussed by the group at the desire of each member. Examination of the completed checklists helps the group leader to customize the program to the needs of the majority of the members.

Below is a sample checklist of problems commonly used as topics of discussion within divorce counseling groups. Counselors should add or delete specific topics as desired.

Making new friends
Dealing with anger/resentment/revenge
Money and need for financial information
How to be both father and mother to my child(ren)
Dealing with guilt/failure
Telling significant others about the divorce
Job-hunting and vocational choice
Appropriate sexual conduct and self-standards
Dealing with loneliness
Forgiving former spouse
Combating the urge to withdraw from everything
Dealing with censure of others
Communicating with former spouse
Setting new goals
Gaining the courage to become involved in a new intimate relationship
Letting go of former spouse
Enhancing self-concept
Identifying areas of needed behavior change

Creative Conduct

Building new skills takes practice. The group provides a safe, nonthreatening environment in which people can experiment with new behaviors and report back on what happened when they tried them out in real situations. The role play is an excellent vehicle for helping group members learn new ways of behaving in typically tense and formerly explosive situations.

Using topics from the critical problem checklist which appear to be of most interest and concern, pairs or triads of group members role play short skits about very common problematic experiences in their lives and then discuss and practice creative and more positive kinds of responses. Not only do they gain new insights into subtle ways their particular mode of acting and talking may have contributed to conflict, they also pick up new skills from watching others begin the process of positive change.

Counselors can harness group creativity in the production of these behavioral vignettes or can utilize the APGA (1976) film mentioned earlier as the catalyst for discussion and skill-building. This film provides visual situations with scripts that address typical issues confronting individuals going through divorce.

Midlife Career* Change Counseling

In order that people may be happy in their work, these three things are needed: They must be fit for it: They must not do too much of it: And they must have a sense of success in it.

J. Ruskin
Pre-Raphaelitism (1851)

Introduction

In the hundred-plus career development workshops we have conducted about the world for adults of all ages, we often pose questions like these to our participants:

"How many of you have stayed in the same career since you finished your formal education?" (very few hands go up)

"How many have made one major career change?" (few hands)

"How many have changed careers twice?" (half the group)

"How many of you would consider that you have made a major career change three or more times?" (one-fourth of the group)

The data are unrecorded and sketchy, the population markedly skewed in the direction of highly educated professionals working in human services (but some have moved into the field from other occupations!), the questions nonstandardized. But the conclusion is inescapable. Second, and even third, careers are now commonplace, at least in our line of work; and statistics from the following study by Arbeiter and others

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*We should explain at the outset of this section that we are risking the wrath of modern adult development theorists by using the terms "career" and "occupation" interchangeably. Today "career development" is generally construed to mean maturation and change in all aspects of living: personal growth, family and civic life, leisure pursuits--as well as occupational choice. We truly agree; and a review of our writing, production of resource materials, and programmatic activities will reveal that we totally support this concept. Making the terms synonymous is a bow to the widespread understanding and use of the word "career," and we ask readers to take this point of view in our discussion.

substantiate the movement of individuals from all segments of society from one career to another.

> *The data showed that 36% of the population between the ages of 16 and 65--more than 400 million Americans--are in a career transition status . . . . Adults in transition want career services of all types . . . most in-transition adults do not know about agencies offering job or career help in their communities.* (Arbeiter et al., 1978)

When career change occurs during the middle years, many questions arise about what are the effects on the person. What, for example, are the motivating forces experienced in midlife? What shifts occur in our psychological well-being and sense of identity? How do we learn the new skills required in a new occupation, respond to possible changes in our self-image, become socialized into a new work role and work environment? Definitive answers to questions like these are still forthcoming, but empirical evidence and anecdotal records are mounting as the complex period of middle age captures the attention of increasing numbers of researchers and theorists. On one issue, however, all of our data sources converge: The midlife period <u>is</u> important, and how we respond to it is critical. Indeed, *"it is the response to the middle age challenge which determines how the second half of a lifetime will be lived"* (Walz, 1978, p. 15).

Reasons for Changing Careers

Why do people change careers? Researchers have been delving into this topic only in the last decade and have had difficulty reaching general conclusions that would lead to a uniform adult psychology. Two studies, for example, focus on single prime causes for career change that seem to be prevalent in the male population. The *aspiration-achievement* gap, so named by Brim (1976) (i.e., the difference between the life career goals that men set for themselves early in life and the reality of what they have achieved) seems to be responsible for some career shifts. Levinson (1976) suggests that the feelings of frustration

and constraint experienced by men in the Becoming One's Own Man (BOOM) life stage may cause them to seek resolution of these feelings through occupational change.

Other researchers have tried to create a taxonomy of reasons. Entine (1977) suggests a kind of Johari Window matrix of causes for career shift involving those that are internal-external, anticipated-unanticipated. As a result of his doctoral research involving a sample of well-educated males, Clopton (1973) classified career changers into three categories: (Type A) those who shifted because of some major event that compelled them to reformulate their life goals; (Type B) those who became gradually disenchanted with what they were doing and sought an occupation that would provide more interest and challenge; and (Type C) those who, while content with their present career, felt that another occupation (which may have started as a hobby) would be more deeply satisfying.

Other studies reveal such a diversity of reasons that the investigators do not even attempt to categorize the responses (Sinick, 1975; Thomas et al., 1976) but simply list them in random order. Sinick offers the following motivations for changing careers, which he states still comprise only a partial list:

Initial career not person's own choice
Career inappropriate from outset
Original aspirations not met by career
Purpose of first career accomplished
Change of career required by changing goals
Satisfaction sought for higher-level needs
Dead end reached in terms of advancement
Inadequate outlet for creativity
Insufficient challenge to abilities
Data-People-Things involvement inappropriate
Incongruence with vocational interests
Desire to implement avocational interests
Disproportion between prescribed and discretionary duties
Insufficient variety in work content
Work pressures and deadlines too demanding
Work becoming too physically demanding
Work context source of dissatisfactions
Employer policies and practices dissatisfying
Purpose of employer enterprise incompatible
Co-workers divergent in values and lifestyles
Personality conflicts with supervisor or co-workers

Earnings outstripped by living expenses
Desire to "keep up with the Joneses"
Social status of occupation inadequate
Insufficient time for leisure activities
Greener grass in another field

(Sinick, 1975, pp. 20-21)

Besides such personally-oriented tugs that move people from one occupation to another are broad sociological, technological, and economic factors. These include changing familial patterns--postponement of marriage and childbearing, decline of the birth rate, increase in the divorce rate, alteration of marital life styles, growing availability of child-care centers; changes in the sex and age composition of the labor force, i.e., more women, more older workers; alterations in occupational patterns such as the shortened work week and job-sharing, a constantly shifting economy; and profound changes in attitudes toward work itself.

Thus, we can see that the reasons people decide to move from one occupation to another are as complex as the individuals themselves, and a product of forces within and without the person in myriad combinations.

Characteristics and Needs of Career Changers

Most studies have shown that career changers are not significantly different in emotional adjustment from those who remain in the same occupations over their working lives, and that midlife career change is not a symptom of aberrant behavior or chronic discontent. So we are not talking about a psychologically-flawed population; rather, we are speaking of a very large group of people representing every kind of occupation and a wide variety of socio-economic and educational backgrounds.

Those of us in our middle years are typically undergoing psychological redirection in value orientation, motivations toward work, and goals, as well as significant physical and environmental changes. Brown (1972) has created an interesting list of the current hypotheses regarding midlife career change and the causal or accompanying characteristics.

1. The middle-life experience for many . . . is an experience of re-establishment rather than of maintenance.

2. The middle-life experience for others is definitely a quest for maintenance . . . which may be resisted.

3. Vocational decision-making in mid-life is far more complex, "soul-rending," and fearsome than it is at the earlier (adolescent) or later (retirement) points in life.

4. The failure to develop an adequate and effective life planning process before middle-life arrives may seriously hamper the individual's capacity to deal with the forces of middle life.

5. The economic and social successes which are driving forces earlier are not likely to be as fulfilling in middle life.

6. The major value orientations of life are up for reshuffling in middle-life.

7. The work orientation adhered to by many in the earlier years begins to fail, if it is to fail, during the middle years.

8. The problems of middle-life are not as likely to be physically derived as they are to be either psychically or life milieu related, but a high percentage of those seeking counseling may have significant physical problems.

9. The problems of unemployment are likely to be more significant in later middle-life than in earlier middle-life. (p. 20)

From the foregoing we may conclude that the way we as adults perceive and deal with career change depends upon our basic motivations, our experience with and expertise in life planning, and our attitudes toward change itself. Several of these hypotheses also reveal clearly that a career shift is more difficult during the midyears than at other periods in life because of the strong probability of deep-seated changes in our values, reasons for working, and life milieu. For many, midlife appears to be a time of questioning, of taking stock of who and where they are, of vulnerability, and for some, of fear.

While knowledge regarding this population is only in the embryo stage, enough data do exist for us to make an attempt at classifying the

needs considered to be typical of the largest number of midlife career changers.

1. Clarifying motivations for career change. First of all, people often need help in exploring their real reasons for wanting to change their occupation. Here we are speaking primarily of voluntary career changers, but even those who are forced out of an occupation for one cause or another often need assistance in examining their reasons for having chosen a particular career and determining the factors in a new career that will bring them the most satisfaction. In either case, career shifters should consider carefully their overt as well as their hidden or less conscious reasons for making a career change and develop honest answers that will help them make wise career choices in the future.

2. Bolstering self-confidence. Lack of self-confidence seems to be a prominent characteristic of midlife career changers--feelings of being deficient in the knowledge or skills required in a new job, of insecurity in moving into new relationships, of anxiety and misconceptions about their employment potential and about the aging process itself.

3. Assessing self. Wise career decisions can only be made when individuals are keenly aware of their abilities, skills, interests, values, and needs. Few middle-aged adults have had the opportunity for in-depth self-examination with the help of a trained professional. They need to acquire extensive knowledge about their psychological and physical strengths and limitations and translate this information into occupational pursuits that will be rewarding and satisfying.

4. Enhancing decision-making skills. So often people embark upon careers for unsound reasons--because the choice was expected or desired by significant others, because of lack of awareness of their own motivations, because of erroneous information about or idealized perceptions of the outcomes of being in that occupation, or simply because of chance factors. Few workers have gone through the process of deciding on goals, imaging alternatives, and then weighing the advantages and disadvantages of following one course or another.

5. Enhancing employability skills. Many adults need help in learning how to prepare an effective resume geared to a particular occupation, how to complete an application, and how to interview. Many also lack job-seeking skills and don't know where to find sources of information that will be helpful in their job search.

6. Envisioning the effects of a career shift. No career change occurs in a vacuum. Sometimes those in the midst of the turmoil of changing careers have not thought through the ramifications of the move on self and family, on other social relationships, on economic security, on existing life style. They need help in considering and working through the short- and long-range consequences that such a change will entail.

In designing their plan for service delivery, counselors can translate these needs into broad goal statements, each with sub-objectives that describe specifically how clients will be different as a result of the counseling experience. The critical step is to assess the needs of a particular client group; emphases will change as the group composition changes.

Program Considerations

Several characteristics of adults have implications for counseling and counseling program design. As we have said before, there is yet no tried and true model for counseling career changers. We are in a relatively new field that has only recently commanded the attention of researchers and theorists. We lack historical perspective, empirically verified techniques, and validated materials. But we have made a beginning; and the things we have learned about adults will be highly significant in designing counseling procedures. The following statements, therefore, are only suggestions, but they have evolved from the experience of the authors and others who have helped adults formulate wise decisions regarding their careers.

1. Format. The most common, and apparently the most effective, mode of service delivery for adults is group counseling--through classes, workshops, seminars, and small group meetings. Adults seem to benefit from sharing their own and hearing about others' problems and concerns. While the amount, depth, and variety of experience will vary significantly according to the age and work backgrounds of group members, each gains from hearing about others' successful and not-so-successful attempts to resolve career-related problems. A support structure thus develops that provides much reassurance as individuals work through their difficulties together.

2. Scheduling. Practically all of the clients who seek counseling regarding career change are currently working. Meetings therefore should be scheduled in a convenient and central location, at times (usually evenings) appropriate for employed persons. Groups usually meet once a week for two to three hours and consist of not more than ten to twelve persons with one trained facilitator.

3. Approach. Many techniques appropriate for younger individuals are not successful with adults. Most adults have experienced "being in charge"--they have made decisions, they have been responsible for themselves and others, they have a realistic sense of what's out there in the world. Thus, the counselor must maintain a delicate balance among the roles of teacher, facilitator, friend, and peer. While the fact of their seeking the services of a professional counselor is an admission that group members can benefit from assistance, help should be offered in a way that maintains their self-respect, reinforces their already proven ability to cope with various dilemmas, and encourages their presence in the group. Because of ambiguous feelings about joining the group, a few clients will use every occasion to challenge and test the wisdom and experience of the group leader. These defensive actions should be handled with sensitivity and understanding by the counselor, who can also aid the person to gain insight into the reasons for his or her behavior.

4. Content. Major emphases in the content of the counseling program will depend on the needs of the group. Administering a brief needs assessment in the client screening stage or at the very beginning of the first group session helps the counselor to tailor the activities and discussion to the greatest satisfaction of all members. Because group members may be at very different places in age, work experience, and educational attainment, it will be impossible to meet everyone's needs at all times; but the broad goals of the program should evolve from the needs expressed by the majority of members. Some clients may require individual counseling on issues not of concern to most of the others.

Career change counseling typically includes the following emphases: (a) exploration of self, including values, interests, strengths, skills, needs, life style preferences; (b) relating knowledge of self to suitable occupations; (c) bolstering self-concept; (d) enhancing decision-making skills; (e) improving employability skills; (f) considering the effects of career change on self and significant others; (g) acquiring specific information on appropriate job opportunities; (h) developing new skills and interests; and, sometimes, (i) finding a job.

Some adults simply want information--specific, accurate, immediate--exclusive of any other service. Others will want and need to become far more proficient in "life skills" before they are ready to make a decision about changing their career.

5. Tests. We caution counselors to use tests sparingly, if at all. Traditional evaluation devices may have been designed for younger people and may emphasize abilities irrelevant to the purpose of the testing. In addition, adults often come to the counseling experience with negative attitudes toward testing based on less than positive school experiences. They may not have taken a test in many years and are liable to feel intense pressure to "do well." Finally, experience has shown that other means of assessment are more effective from a variety of standpoints.

When designing their programs, counselors will also want to keep in mind some other factors of a psychological nature that will enhance their effectiveness in working with adults.

For example, adults want specifics. They are impatient with material that is unrelated to their immediate concerns. They have need to be aware of their progress, to "see results." The relationship between what they are doing or learning and the real world needs to be made very clear as they are intolerant of abstractions or ambiguities. While broadening self-understanding and knowledge of career options is usually a necessary part of the counseling process, the ultimate aim in adult counseling is to narrow alternatives, focus interests, and help clients make appropriate, concrete decisions.

The family situation is extremely significant for midlife career changers, as any decision they make usually has strong repercussions within the family structure. A change in one person's career often puts heavy demands for change on other family members, and their willingness or unwillingness to meet those demands should be an important topic for discussion and clarification.

Crisis counseling techniques are frequently utilized in counseling adults because so often they need immediate relief from a particular life situation. Long-range and more developmental types of activities are eschewed as counselors attempt to bring all available resources to bear on the pressing problem. This is particularly true in career change counseling when clients have lost their jobs and are desperately seeking ways to support themselves and their families.

Counselors should also be extremely aware of their own possible bias toward "older" people. Career changers are often in their forties and fifties, or even in their sixties, and because they are themselves becoming sensitive to the inroads of advancing years, they are quick to pick up negative or stereotypical attitudes in others. Age-biased behavior shows itself when counselors communicate, however subtly or nonverbally, that certain behaviors are only appropriate to certain ages or that they possess negative attitudes toward any age group.

Decision-making is really the heart of counseling midlife career changers (as it is in the majority of counseling interactions). Few adults have actually learned a systematic decision-making process or examined how they themselves usually reach important decisions. Adult counselors should have thorough knowledge of the steps involved in effective decision-making and be able to demonstrate and model these behaviors for the group. And as often as possible, clients should have the chance to practice thoughtful decision-making both within and outside the group.

Finally, counselors should be fully knowledgeable about adult development so as to be able to sense where various clients are in their own growth patterns. Adult career counseling is not for the novice. Counselors will be tested every step of the way, and they should not only possess highly developed interpersonal relationship skills but should also be very knowledgeable about current career materials and available sources of needed information and/or referral.

Counseling Activities

Bookstores and magazine racks are literally crammed with hardbacks, paperbacks, and articles on confidence-building, decision-making, appreciating the beauty of middle age, and choosing the right career. Taking charge of your own life seems to be the most pervasive theme in the current literature, and many of the resources are of the self-help type.

Some of the most popular recent titles are listed with other more scholarly works in the Resources section of this monograph. Interested readers will also find sequenced materials for trainers to use with groups of career changers. The activities we provide here are ones we have used with success and are representative of the kind of materials found in the more comprehensive program guides. We do caution that they are presented out of context, and, to achieve the most desired outcomes, should be integrated into a systematically organized series of experiences that are part of an objective-based, carefully planned program.

I am . . .

The significance of career change is intensified when a person's work assumes priority over all other activities. Often people are unaware of how much their self-esteem and sense of value as a person is tied up with their occupation.

A very interesting way to tap into people's perceptions of themselves is to ask them to take a sheet of paper, put "I am . . ." at the top, and list the numbers 1 to 10 down the left side of the sheet. Then, without giving any examples (which might skew the results), ask them to complete the statement "I am . . ." ten times. They can choose any words or phrases that they wish--anything that comes to mind--that they feel is truly descriptive of who they are.

After a few minutes, when all of the group members appear to be finished, have them form pairs and share their lists with one another. Then bring the group back together and ask questions like these:

1. How many of your statements describe a role you play? Give examples as you ask each question, such as: I am a parent, I am a bowler, I am a machinist, I am a secretary.

2. How many of your statements describe your personal characteristics or feelings? Examples: I am sensitive, I am intelligent, I am impatient, I am excited about new adventures.

3. How many of your statements have to do with work or your work role? Examples: I am a good manager, I am task-oriented (if the person thought of it in relation to occupation), I am organized (again in relation to occupation).

4. How many of your statements are related to life outside of work? Examples: I am a parent, I am hungry most of the time, I am a bridge player.

5. As you examine your responses to Nos. 3 and 4, what does this tell you about yourself?

6. What ideas or feelings do you have as you reflect on your responses?

Time should be allowed for discussion of and reactions to each question. At the conclusion of the activity participants often gain new insights into how significant career change is going to be, especially when their answers focus on roles and work as opposed to personal characteristics and other life experiences. They become more aware of the importance of the decision to change occupation and of the risks it may involve.

An optional procedure is to give everyone ten slips of paper and have them prioritize their completion statements before sharing them with someone else, shifting and moving the separate slips of paper into various positions until they are satisfied that the results truly reflect their ranked importance to the individual. The prioritized list then becomes even more meaningful as they consider the relationship of their perceptions of who they are to a new career.

Goal-a-Graph

The beginning stages of a planned program for counseling career changers will most often and most appropriately deal with self-exploration activities to bring participants to a new and sharper awareness of their personal characteristics, needs, and wants. One of the major activities in the program will be for people to set new goals for themselves and state the specific steps they intend to take to achieve them.

As a warm-up or precursor to this most important phase, we often use what we call the "Goal-a-Graph." This allows people to consider where they've been, where they are, and where they'd like to be in many aspects of life. To orient clients to the activity, we draw a rough approximation of the form on newsprint or chalkboard and, choosing one of the categories, e.g., "Physical," we use ourselves as an example.

We ask participants to put the words "I have been" at the top of the first column. (The reason we have people write in the column labels is because they seem to feel a greater sense of ownership in the experience than if the headings were printed on the form.) Then we fill in the space (talking the meanwhile) with words like "active, involved, regular exercise." The heading on the second column is "I am," and participants write that in the space. We then continue our example with words like "sedentary, non-active, TV watcher." At the top of the third column they write "I wish." In this space we put phrases like "regular exercise, jogging 3 times a week, 10 minutes exercise every morning." Then, in the last column, they put "I am going to." Here is their chance to state what they actually intend to do to make this last column approximate the "I wish" category--such as "get up early enough to exercise 10 minutes every morning." When we finish our brief example, participants complete each category of the form with their own statements.

This activity takes about an hour and includes discussion with a partner of the completed forms. The purpose is to give a broad overview of many categories of life career development and to put the totality of

the person into some kind of overall perspective. Actual goal-setting in the area of career change with statements of very specific objectives, of course, will follow this first broad summary.

GOAL-A-GRAPH

Garry R. Walz and Libby Benjamin

Physical				
Emotional				
Occupational				
Intellectual/ Professional				
Spiritual				
Leisure time				
Interpersonal				
Other				

Whose Problem Is This, Anyway?

Fitting in nicely somewhere in the program, usually after group members have set some initial goals, will be a session on barriers in which people identify the obstacles, both personal and environmental, that they believe stand in the way of their achieving whatever it is they want to do. It is often the case, however, that people are fixed in their thinking, unable to move because they have not freed their minds to consider all possible alternatives. So we allow others to do this for them.

In this activity participants form triads. One individual in the threesome, the "focus person," briefly describes to the other two a particularly sticky problem or decision, presenting as many pertinent facts as are necessary to give the others a reasonable idea of the situation. Then the focus person sits back, listens, and says nothing while the other two individuals debate his/her problem, one taking the side of "I'd like to _____," and the other the side of ". . . but I can't because . . ." (or whatever two opposing stances might be in the decision or conflict). The discussers use the word "I," in their arguments, each pretending to be the focus person. In the process of the dialogue, and because they are not constrained by any previous thinking on the problem, the discussers often open up new avenues of action, describe new ways of thinking, reveal new strategies for accomplishing a particular goal or solving a certain dilemma which the focus person has not considered.

When the "debate" is over, the three people examine the experience together, the two who discussed the problem acting as counselors to the focus person. When this round is finished, another member of the triad becomes the focus person and the other two play the same roles of discusser and counselor.

This activity can be very helpful in broadening the range of alternatives people need for wise decision-making and clarifying and helping to eliminate some of the often unnecessary barriers people construct for themselves.

Preretirement Counseling

Preretirement planning . . . requires each individual to . . . establish policies for living which have the greatest personal meaning. Your retirement is your responsibility.

U.V. Manion
Retirement Preparation Guide 10 (1977)

Introduction

Adjustment to retirement, that is, moving from full-time paid employment to a life of nonwork and leisure, is one of the major adaptive tasks of our later lives. The degree to which this adjustment is successful determines to a large extent how satisfying and rewarding our later years will be. It has been said that the younger a person is, the more glamorous retirement appears to be. As we grow older, however, our feelings are apt to change, and what formerly gave promise of being a roseate future with unlimited time to do exactly as we pleased may, as the time for retirement draws near, loom empty and purposeless.

For many, retirement may appear as a threat rather than a chance to prepare for a richer life--may be perceived as the first "insult" of aging (Manion, 1976), as evidence that they are "older" or "senior citizens." In cases where work has been the primary force and interest in life, retirees may feel that for them life is over, that they are no longer useful or needed and have been "put on the shelf." In other situations the enforced closeness of spouses who have heretofore spent little time together may strain the marital relationship. If a person has placed significant value on "success" (as defined by prestige and importance gained through a work role), retiring may reduce or eliminate the source of gratification and thus lower self-esteem. For individuals who value order and a fairly static existence, retirement may lead to a discomfiting lack of structure. And aging itself, with its concomitant organic and functional slowdown, may cause some persons to criticize

themselves unjustly for their decreased physical and cognitive abilities.

The change from gainful work to aimless living can set the stage for feelings of boredom, anomie, hopelessness, confusion, anxiety, isolation--a clinical syndrome known as "Retirement Shock." This condition may manifest itself in physical as well as psychological disturbances. Researchers (e.g., Ellison, 1968; Greene et al., 1969) have found, for example, significant correlations between illness and retirement, between strokes and retirement, between suicides and retirement. We may expect such problems to increase in the future as we move more fully into an automated-cybernetic era with shorter work weeks, a lowering of the retirement age, and increased life expectancy.

Well! We are painting a dismal picture indeed, but the palette is not all that drab. Many persons herald the chance to retire with enthusiasm and eagerness. They look forward to the cessation of work as a period of potential enrichment which will provide freedom to pursue meaningful hobbies or interests kept long in abeyance, to read, to write, to travel, to move to a more desirable climate, to start a new career, and to search for personal wholeness and individuation. For those to whom financial security is guaranteed, the prospect of retirement can be even more golden.

What we may conclude from the foregoing discussion is that retirement means different things to different people. All of us know retired people who seem to be enjoying life to the fullest, who are "turned on" to their experiences, who continue to grow and learn as they encounter new roles, settings, and events. Most of us have also encountered retirees who seem to be unhappy, pessimistic, and frustrated, for whom life appears to hold little meaning. What makes the difference? Why is the transition smooth and positive for some, and for others, fraught with anxiety and feelings of despair? The answers to these questions are not simple; they depend on a myriad of factors within and without the person. But one clear fact emerges: People who <u>plan</u> for their retirement years and who possess realistic expectations concerning what the prospective changes will entail are more likely to move into the new life phase with equanimity and, yes, with anticipation.

Purposes and Importance of Preretirement Counseling

Preretirement counseling is a human service designed to prevent or minimize the problems and dilemmas of later years. The process of preretirement counseling includes helping people (a) to recognize the need for preretirement planning; (b) to develop clear and realistic expectations regarding what retirement will mean to them in their particular situation; (c) to acquire knowledge in several important areas such as preparation of a will and good nutrition habits; (d) to develop alternatives regarding their retirement future; and (e) to make choices that are consistent with their values, interests, economic situation, health, life style.

Preretirement counseling is of major importance today for the following reasons:

1. *Most people do not systematically plan for their retirement without an external source of motivation. A counselor can provide that motivation.* Even if concern with retirement issues is not the presenting problem, it may emerge that a client's anxieties about the future and/or concern about forthcoming decisions involve questions about the work role, and could be greatly reduced if he/she accepted the idea of retirement and clarified future plans.

2. *Failure to plan for retirement can lead to serious problems. By assisting persons to anticipate potential problems, the counselor may help avert them.* For instance, many people assume that interesting, satisfying leisure activities will automatically appear to fill their time after they retire. And sometimes, for a short period of time, this may be true. Because work encompasses such a major portion of life, however, people often experience a vacuum when they stop working. Far too often leisure activities lose their appeal and individuals become bored and frustrated. If the counselor can help people to anticipate such problems, he/she can help them make suitable preparations or eliminate some problems altogether.

3. *A trained counselor has ready access to more resources than does the average individual.* Counselors who engage in helping people plan for retirement know what kinds of useful resources exist nationally and locally and can serve as resource linkers for their clients. Few potential retirees, at least as they begin the planning process, are aware of the numerous sources of help available through their company, educational institutions, or various groups or agencies in their local community.

4. *Preretirement planning is facilitated when clients possess skills in decision-making, when they participate in small group interactions, and when they have the opportunity for one-to-one counseling.* Many techniques used by helping professionals for other client concerns can also be effective in preretirement planning. Even clients who already recognize the need for planning can benefit from learning a systematic approach to problem-solving.

Major Areas of Client Concern

While each of us possesses highly personal thoughts and feelings toward retirement, the most commonly expressed concerns can be grouped into a few major areas. Counselors can help clients to plan more wisely if they make sure that they deal seriously with each of these topics.

Finances. Financial planning is paramount in the achievement of a worry-free retirement and is a very real concern of preretirees as they contemplate the rate of inflation and the possibility of a reduced standard of living. Truly effective planning for economic security should begin long before the time of retirement, but counselors can be of great help, even to non-planners. While they do not have to be financial wizards themselves, they can refer clients to various specialized investment advisers or local seminars that address this issue.

Health. The focus here is on the preventive aspects of health care such as good nutrition and exercise which, especially if started early, promote good health and fitness. A related topic that should be opened up for serious discussion is the concept of aging. People approaching

retirement often have fears about the potential decline of their physical, mental, and sexual vitality. By dealing directly with the aging process, counselors can help people come to view aging as a natural and positive experience.

Activities in retirement. The preretiree who states confidently, "I'm looking forward to doing nothing!" is in for trouble. When the routine of employment suddenly disappears, "doing nothing" or even pursuing the most absorbing hobby or leisure activity will not fill the gap. Most people recognize this, and many express strong concerns about "What will I do?" They want to continue to feel useful and to perform some kind of work--sometimes paid, more often volunteer. Counselors can help by having potential retirees engage in self-exploration regarding their values and strengths, and perhaps begin at once to identify and develop long-neglected or latent interests that will bring postretirement reward and satisfaction.

Social relationships. So often social activities are work-related, and leaving the job may cause many people to feel bereft and lonely. Preretirees need to think through their human relationships--with friends, co-workers, family--imaging how they will change with the life role change. If retirement involves moving to a new community, the picture shifts dramatically. For some, changing location will bring a sense of adventure; for others, feelings of sorrow and even fear at leaving long-time friends and the known. Being conscious of their present social interactions and activities can motivate individuals to take the initiative in preparing for change.

Place of residence. When retirees are no longer tied down to their jobs, in most cases they have the option of choosing where they will live. Perhaps their present home is too large now that the children are gone, or too expensive to maintain, or perhaps they just don't have the desire or the energy to keep up with annual leaf-raking, flower- and lawn-tending, or snow removal. For many the choice is dictated by where the children and grandchildren reside. Others may be pulled by the glamour of Arizona, California, or Florida.

The decision to move to a new location should be made with care by all older people. This does not mean that they should not make a change, only that they should think the matter through very carefully before doing so. Counselors can help people faced with such a decision by helping them to investigate important considerations before moving such as cost of living, climate, taxes, advantages and disadvantages of condominium living, and the like.

Marital relationships. As we said before, even the most felicitous marriage can suffer when the usual patterns of togetherness and communication are disrupted through retirement of one or both spouses. Counselors can help facilitate adjustment to the new style of living together, as well as provide guidance on issues of sexuality which may be of concern to persons approaching retirement.

Personal growth and development. Individuals continue to grow and develop throughout their life span, but some potential retirees either don't know this or don't believe that it's true! Many need help at this critical point in their lives in identifying new goals or potential, or just in internalizing the fact that not only will they continue to maintain their present levels of functioning, they will also have the capacity to lead even richer lives than before. Through planned experiences in both pre- and post-retirement programs, many individuals, perhaps for the first time, have the time and the opportunity to conduct a thoughtful examination of who they are and what they would most like to realize from the last quarter or third of their lives. The results of this self-exploration can infuse the future with new purpose and meaning.

Death and dying. Preparation for the eventual death of a spouse or other close family members, as well as for one's own death, is an integral part of the aging process and must surely be considered as people make long-range future plans. Decisions regarding such issues as finances and location and type of housing will be strongly affected by the health of the retiree and should be approached openly and directly. Many people also need assistance through periods of grief or bereavement as they gather their forces to move forward alone.

Program Considerations

The number and kinds of services now available for preretirees are on the increase. Most large companies now provide preretirement planning help, although few do more than expose workers to a review of the pension plan and to discussion of questions that may arise about important retirement issues. Models of preretirement counseling programs proliferate; and while they differ in approach, duration, and format, they are quite consistent in content, containing information on income and finances, wills and estate planning, continuing education, health, housing, legal issues, role change, and creative use of time. A more recent addition to such programs is inclusion of activities having to do with exploration of psychological concerns and enhancement of self-knowledge.

The efficacy of the program, according to recent research, depends greatly upon the approach utilized. Large-group presentations, while useful for imparting substantive information, seem to be less effective in achieving employee satisfaction and raising employee consciousness and understanding than the small-group discussion format, which allows participants to voice their concerns and explore issues in a supportive environment. Evaluation studies also suggest that the most effective programs (a) combine solid information with experiences designed to enhance positive attitudes and behaviors, (b) utilize teaching and learning methodologies proven to be effective, and (c) are conducted by trained facilitators.

Few generalizations can be made regarding "typical" program length or group size. Variations are enormous, ranging from perhaps 200 individuals listening to a one-shot, 2-hour lecture; to groups of 30 to 50 preretirees attending 2- to 3-hour presentations over several weeks; to under 20 individuals experiencing an in-depth, 5- to 10-day workshop.

It is not our purpose in this section to present "the" most effective model of preretirement counseling. That has not yet been identified--and perhaps never will be because of the wide variety of needs and interests among those who will retire. Rather, we are suggesting

some strategies that we have found helpful in our own work with preretirees. Individual counselors can use these resources according to their own program goals and the chosen sequence of program experiences.

Counseling Activities

Each of the following activities is appropriate for small groups. Orientation to and instructions for the experiences can be given to a large audience; but for meaningful outcomes, discussion and reaction should take place among groups of not more than eight to ten participants. Groups can be facilitated by a counselor or leaderless, the purpose of the communication being for all group members to examine their attitudes and feelings, and reflect upon new insights, in the company of peers with similar concerns.

These suggested activities will give counselors a good start in their preretirement counseling efforts. They provide only a beginning, of course, but they do set the stage for what will follow by getting people really involved in the preretirement planning process and motivating them to take action. In the Resources section of this publication, readers will find an extensive list of resources that can be helpful both in the design of a preretirement counseling program and as sources of referral for clients.

Exploring Issues

An excellent way of getting people to become immersed in thinking about preretirement planning is to present them at the outset with some generalizations in the area (projections, facts, philosophy) and ask them to examine their own attitudes in regard to each statement. Listed below are ten such statements which counselors can use as is, or modify as desired.[1] In groups of three or four, each group discusses an assigned number of issues and then shares a few major outcomes or insights from the discussion with the other groups.

1. On the whole, individuals maintain a high level of physical, mental, and sexual vitality well into their sixties.

2. Retirement is increasingly becoming a zone of choice in which individuals have numerous options regarding when and how they will retire.

3. We have become a graying society. The number of persons over 65 increases by 350,000 annually. There are now seven times more people over 65 than there were in 1900. And the trend will continue: 1 in 7 persons will be over 65 by the year 2010.

4. Systematic planning for retirement is the exception rather than the rule. An attitude of "somehow it will all work out" pervades the thinking of many. Even when helping services for retirement planning are available, relatively few people take advantage of them. Many see preretirement counseling as lacking in value; as an expression of personal weakness; or, if it is suggested by the administrator or boss, as an indication that they are "on the way out."

5. Retirement may be thought of as a phase of life which may occur at almost any age and under highly variable circumstances. Persons who plan for retirement and move into it gradually appear to derive the greatest satisfaction from it. Some people find it to be the most rewarding time of their lives.

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[1]Two of these activities are taken from Helping People with Preretirement Planning--An Introduction, (Walz, Benjamin, Mamarchev, & Pritchett, 1979), a module developed by the authors as part of a project sponsored by the then U.S. Office of Education, in association with the American Institutes for Research, Palo Alto, California.

6. Working patterns of the future may differ significantly from the present. Greater movement will occur in and out of the labor force as people "stop-out" for extended periods of education and leisure. With projected trends that 15% of the population will be able to provide all necessary goods and services for everyone by the year 2000, many people will never experience occupational life as we presently do.

7. People will have increasing amounts of leisure time. Using leisure time for personal growth will become a major challenge, particularly for those without major occupational commitments.

8. Retirement will take on new meanings as it occurs earlier in life. Many people will spend one-third of their lives in retired status. For them retirement will occur at a time of their own choice, and they will be able to exercise options and pursue activities not possible during their working lives.

9. Increasing mobility, dual careers, changing marriage patterns, and greater involvement of family members in activities outside the home will change the structure of the family. The "empty nest" experience will cause people to seek new ways of finding support and of expressing and receiving love and caring.

10. New legislation and societal attitudes regarding retirement will provide more discretion for individuals as to <u>when</u> they retire and <u>what</u> they retire to. Many people will "phase into" retirement over a period of 10 to 20 years.

Planning in Action

As a departure from the usual sitting and talking format, we sometimes ask participants to leave the workshop site and interview various individuals working close by regarding their personal attitudes and future planning. For this activity we provide an interview sheet on which they record responses to their questions. Our participants have interviewed custodians, waitresses, academic faculty, maintenance personnel, administrators, secretaries, company presidents, elevator operators, hostesses, desk clerks, to name a few. The discussion which ensues upon their return is extremely stimulating--and revealing, especially in regard to the lack of thinking about the future on the part of most of the interviewees. Talking with "real people" about their lives brings an element of reality to the learning experience that reinforces the meaning and importance of what the participants are doing.

Below is a suggested list of questions that we have found useful in this activity. On the form itself, of course, room is left after each question to record responses.

1. May I ask into what age range you fall? (20-30, 30-40, 40-50, 50-60, over 60)?
2. When do you plan or expect to retire?
3. How do you think most people feel about retirement?
4. How do you feel about your own retirement?
5. Have you thought about what you will do when you retire?
6. Have you taken any steps to plan for your own retirement? If so, what?
7. Do you think you could use some professional help in planning for retirement?

Preretirement Planning Checklist

A practical and systematic way of identifying areas of planning that may have been neglected or given less attention than needed is to use a retirement readiness checklist.[2] The form contains statements relating to various areas in which people should do some planning and preparation. Each participant completes the checklist individually, checking those statements that are true for him/herself. Thus, the absence of a check-mark reveals clearly something the individual should think seriously about and/or do to round out the planning process.

After responding to the form individually, participants discuss in small groups what they have learned about their own level of preparation for retirement. Often we ask that participants contract with one another to perform certain actions or acquire specific knowledge to fill some of their personal planning gaps. The following pages contain our version of a personal checklist for preretirement planning.

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[2]The checklist we use was adapted from the "Retirement Readiness Checklist" developed by Dr. Woodrow W. Hunter, Institute of Gerontology, The University of Michigan.

PERSONAL CHECKLIST FOR PRERETIREMENT PLANNING

Listed below are specific questions having to do with major areas of concern for preretirees. Place a check beside those things you have done in anticipation of the time you will retire. The items not checked will suggest areas to which you should probably give some attention.

A. Finance

_____ 1. I've found out how much it costs me to live now.

_____ 2. I have a good idea of how much it will cost me to live after I retire.

_____ 3. I know what my income will be after I retire.

_____ 4. I've determined which of my living expenses are likely to be less after I retire, and which are likely to be more.

_____ 5. I'm paying up my big bills so that they will be out of the way by the time I retire.

_____ 6. I've tried living on the amount of money I'll get after I retire to see how things will work out.

_____ 7. I've reviewed my insurance policies to see whether they meet my present and future needs.

_____ 8. I've found out what I need to do to have some health insurance after I retire.

_____ 9. I've talked with the Social Security people to find out what I should do before I retire in order to get my Social Security.

_____ 10. I have made a will.

B. Health

_____ 1. I get a general physical examination at least once a year whether or not I feel sick.

_____ 2. I'm watching what I eat in order to keep my weight down.

_____ 3. I get some exercise every day such as a brisk walk or working in my garden.

B. Health (continued)

_____ 4. I see to it that I get enough rest every day.

_____ 5. I've found out what kinds of foods I should eat every day to keep healthy.

_____ 6. I have my blood pressure checked periodically.

_____ 7. I check with my doctor if I have unusual pain or other symptoms.

_____ 8. I take my physical limitations into account and try to live within them.

_____ 9. I've checked over my home and corrected things that might make me fall or have some other kind of accident.

_____ 10. I've had my eyes examined by a doctor during the past year.

C. Social Relationships

_____ 1. I've made some new friends during the past year.

_____ 2. I'm making the effort to spend time with other people--at my church or synagogue, at a club, or at the homes of my friends.

_____ 3. I've visited a club or activity center for retired people to see what the club and the people are like.

_____ 4. I take an interest in people who are younger than I am.

_____ 5. I invite people to come to my home or attend social events with me, and I accept invitations from others.

If you are married, respond to these statements:

_____ 6. I am keeping in touch with my children or relatives by visiting or writing letters.

_____ 7. I let my children or relatives run their own affairs.

_____ 8. We make it possible for our children or relatives to get together for special occasions.

_____ 9. My spouse and I have made our retirement plans together.

_____ 10. My spouse and I have made some friends in common.

If you are not married, respond to these statements:

_____ 6. I am keeping in touch with my relatives or close friends by visiting or writing letters.

_____ 7. I let my relatives or close friends run their own affairs.

_____ 8. I make it possible for my relatives or close friends to get together for special occasions.

_____ 9. I've discussed my plans for retirement with my relatives or a close friend.

_____ 10. I've made a few friends who are close enough to me to take the place of a family of my own.

D. Use of Time

_____ 1. I've talked with some retired people to see how they spend their time.

_____ 2. I've thought about some specific activities I can do after I retire which will make me feel useful even though I will not be working.

_____ 3. I'm doing some reading or taking part in an educational program to learn something new.

_____ 4. I'm learning a new hobby which I will enjoy doing after I retire.

_____ 5. I'm keeping up with events so that I shall not come to be regarded as a "has-been."

_____ 6. My spouse (or close friends) and I have talked about things we can enjoy doing together in retirement.

_____ 7. I've investigated possible volunteer activities I might enjoy doing after I retire.

_____ 8. I've made some plans for what I will do immediately after I retire.

_____ 9. I've thought how I can modify or adapt my present hobbies to suit retired status.

_____ 10. I've investigated the possibility of part-time paid employment after I retire.

E. Where to Live

If you are planning to stay where you are, answer these statements:

_____ 1. My spouse and I are in agreement on the decision to stay where we are.

_____ 2. I've completed certain changes or repairs on my place so that I won't have the expense after I retire.

_____ 3. I've considered other possibilities such as moving into a smaller place or dividing our place into two units and renting one of them.

_____ 4. I've thought about what our neighborhood will be like 10 to 15 years from now.

_____ 5. I've thought about what I (we) will do when I (we) am no longer able to keep my (our) own place.

If you are planning to move after you retire, answer these statements:

_____ 1. I've looked into the cost of living at the new place and decided that I can afford to live there.

_____ 2. I've tested the climate at the new place during more than one season of the year and know I will like it.

_____ 3. I've made some new friends at the new place.

_____ 4. I've found out that the new place offers medical care when and if it is required.

_____ 5. I've made certain that there will be plenty to do at the new place.

F. Personal Growth and Development

_____ 1. I know what kind of activities bring me the greatest pleasure and reward.

_____ 2. I have a clear idea of what my main strengths are.

_____ 3. I've set some short-term goals (6 months to 1 year) to work toward after I retire.

_____ 4. I've set some middle-term goals (1 to 5 years) to work toward after I retire.

_____ 5. I've made some plans to upgrade my knowledge or skill in a field of interest after I retire.

Leisure Counseling

He hath no leisure who useth it not.

G. Herbert
Jacula Prudentum (1651)

Introduction

Recently we overheard two sixtyish males talking together--Tom, recently retired and loving it, and John, about to retire.

"Say, Tom, you know there's a community college near your trailer court. Maybe you could apply to teach a summer session."

"Well . . ."

"Or, hey, that cafeteria near you is for sale--with your management skills you could really turn that around. That'd be a good job for you!"

"John, I . . ."

"I'll bet you could make a pocketful if you organized some tours for these old ducks around here. They don't seem to have anything to do."

"Wait, wait, wait. John, now listen. I - don't - want - to - work! I'm happy. Play golf four times a week, ride my bike, exercise classes, little dinners with friends--man, I've got it made!"

"But, John, you have to do something!"

We remembered this conversation with interest because (a) Tom's attitude was so refreshingly unique and (b) John's words reflected an orientation to leisure that is typical of so many adults in today's world. And the roots of that orientation are buried deep in the foundation of American culture.

Leisure has had a long and sinful history in our society. The strong spiritual orientation of the earliest Americans caused leisure to be viewed as the devil's ploy. According to Nash (1953),

> *From the standpoint of the early Church, play was idleness and trifling as opposed to serious undertakings. It included gambling and licentiousness. Play was to be avoided--play was an instrument of the devil.* (p. 83)

Besides the religious influence, it is easy to understand why leisure would be frowned upon when the birth of a nation required such dogged determination, incredible stamina, intense striving, and total dedication of its peoples. Early settlers equated leisure with laziness and nonproductivity, a wasting of precious time, and an avoidance of duty.

John's statements cited above illustrate how this strong work ethic continues to pervade our thinking and behavior. Many of us view leisure with suspicion and feel guilty if we are not avidly working toward some end that will bring external reward. Acceptance of leisure activities as a worthy and integral part of the wholeness of life still comes hard for a lot of us.

Appreciation and understanding of the appropriate place of leisure in life is gaining a foothold in the American consciousness, however. The myriad changes that have occurred as we have moved from a people struggling for survival to an affluent complex society are responsible for the current interest in leisure, which can only broaden as individuals find themselves with larger and larger blocks of uncommitted time. Consider, for example, the influences on leisure time of changing work patterns; technology and its impact on every facet of living; the increased potential life span; changes in sex roles, family patterns and life styles; ever-rising standards of living; heightened emphasis on physical fitness; availability of more and different types of leisure activities.

Underlying all of these forces that are moving us perhaps into a new "leisure ethic" is humankind's increasing insistence on creative self-expression, through work and play. With elemental needs satisfied, we are more concerned about the quality of our lives and the attainment of our potential; we attempt to realize all possible meaning and benefit from our life experiences. Because work offers minimal opportunity for many of us to express our uniqueness, we seek to satisfy this need through leisure time activities.

Leisure Defined

We typically think of leisure in relation to work. In the diction-

ary it is defined as "freedom provided by the cessation of activities; *esp:* time free from work or duties." However subtle, the implication of nonproductiveness, of idleness, of not doing something, comes through. With the recent changes in perspective toward the importance of leisure and its contribution to the fullness of life, leisure is now coming to hold far more meaning. This is probably best exemplified in the variety of definitions found in the current literature on leisure.

At the present time leisure definitions appear to fall into five major categories: time-related, activity-related, work-related, psychologically-related, and some kind of composite of all of these (Loesch, 1980). Time-related definitions suggest that leisure involves something one does in time left over from what one has to do, "time beyond that required, organically, for existence and subsistence" (Brightbill & Mobley, 1977, p. 5). Similar to time-related, the activity-related leisure definitions suggest that leisure involves any activity engaged in by personal choice, after completing required activities (Bull, 1971; Dumazedier, 1967). The most commmon definitions, as we pointed out earlier, are work-related. Wilensky (1960) speaks of two types: (a) *compensatory,* where individuals seek to fulfill through leisure the needs that work does not or cannot satisfy; and (b) *spillover,* where individuals partially satisfy their needs through work but seek deeper fulfillment through work-related activities. In the former, activities are usually quite different in nature; in the latter, quite similar. An important distinction to be found in work-related definitions is that work is externally rewarded by something extrinsic to the work, and leisure brings intrinsic reward to the individual through the performance of the activity itself.

Psychologically-related definitions are becoming far more prevalent as individuals assign increasing importance to personal freedom and self-actualization. For example, de Grazia (1962) says that the quality of feeling one has about an activity is a necessary component of leisure. Neulinger (1974) states that leisure is "a state of the mind; . . . a way . . . of being at peace with oneself and what one is doing" (p. xv). Putting it together eloquently, Bernier (1975) declares:

> *Leisure is the dimension of an individual's life in which freedom finds expression. It is a human condition that allows an individual to express his or her unique style and personal psychic rhythm. It is the quality that encourages self-exploration through meditation and silence and through the exteriorization and affirmation of the self through intimacy, creativity, philosophical speculation and ethical choice, and play.* (p. 6)

Other researchers (Kaplan, 1960, 1975; Kelly, 1972) attempt to present models or lists of characteristics of and conditions for leisure, emphasizing the complex and comprehensive nature of the concept.

We can see from the above that if we are to do "leisure counseling," we will enjoy much latitude in focus, content, and approach. Indeed, the definitions of leisure counseling vary as widely as the descriptions of what leisure is. Overs (1975), substituting the word "avocational" for "leisure," states that *avocational choices are beset with the same difficulties as choice of occupation, choice of mate, choice of college, and so on,* and concludes that while guidance can alleviate lack of knowledge, counseling is required to help individuals cope with *choice anxiety, guilt, and fear* (p. 36). This statement is supported by Weisberg (1975): *Individuals must be helped to make meaningful personal choices to assure that [leisure] time is used purposefully* (p. 14).

Focusing on typical counseling goals and techniques, Gunn (1977) defines leisure counseling as:

> *a process utilizing verbal facilitation techniques to promote self-awareness, awareness of leisure attitudes, values, and feelings, and the development of decision-making and problem-solving skills related to leisure participation.* (p. 22)

Edwards (1980) avers that:

> *Leisure counseling is a process that occurs when a trained leisure counselor helps one person or a group of persons, of any age, to determine their present leisure interests, attitudes, and needs--then assists them in choosing and following leisure pursuits that are practical, satisfying, available, and unharmful.* (p. 1)

A broader statement of leisure counseling is offered by Shank and Kennedy (1976):

> *Leisure counseling involves a careful examination of a person's background, beliefs, values and attitudes and becomes a development education process as well as a remedial counseling process.* (p. 259)

Unfortunately, leisure counseling has not existed long enough to allow for the amount of research necessary to test and validate a theory or to develop a definition that will be truly descriptive as well as pleasing to interested practitioners. Current definitions evolve from the experiences of those who have engaged in the process of counseling clients regarding leisure time activities. But if we can summarize all of these definitions in any meaningful way, it would appear that the purposes of leisure counseling are to help people move toward greater self-understanding and personal growth (the underlying goal of all counseling), broaden their interests, increase their knowledge of opportunities and facilities for self-expression within their own communities, and make choices that will enhance the quality of their lives and move them toward greater self-fulfillment.

Research on Leisure

Child psychologists have recognized for years that play is a basic need of children. In 1946 LaSalle stated:

> *If children are to be robust and healthy, if they are to have endurance, strength, and stamina, if they are to be physically fit and stand the strain of modern living, they must have adequate and vigorous play experiences.* (p. 8)

Other researchers have found strong positive correlations between play activities and ideal physical development, alert intellectual functioning and good mental habits, desirable social skills, and a healthy self-concept (Anderson, 1960; Cowell, 1960; Mitchell & Mason, 1948). Adults also need to play--to engage in activities for intrinsic reward or self-renewal, to achieve a happy blend of work and leisure, duty and choice.

Some individuals seem to find creative and rewarding leisure outlets with little difficulty; others spend what free time they have snared by a television set or sleeping; still others choose less productive or even harmful ways of using up hours of boredom and inertia by resorting to alcohol or drugs. How do we choose leisure activities? What causes one adult to jog or sew or take courses in a nearby college or read or play tennis or learn gourmet cooking or garden or build a table--and another to be devoid of ideas or interests for leisure time pursuits? Such questions regarding the etiology of choice are capturing the attention of researchers as our healthy, long-lived population searches for ways to spend its nonwork time.

Some of the factors that influence adults in their choice of leisure time activities are easily recognized: natural talents, needs, availability of facilities, societally-approved sex roles, physical and mental condition, childhood leisure activities, economic situation, education, values, family and friends, social groups, prestige of the activity. Other causes are rooted more deeply and less visibly in who we are. Nash's study (1958; confirmed by Schmitz-Scherer & Strodel, 1971) substantiates the influence of the family on attitudes toward leisure and age of interest development. The findings show that 60 percent of interests begin before age 10, 70 percent before age 12, 20 percent between 12 and 20 years, and 5 percent after age 21. The same investigation also explored the place of origin of leisure attitudes, skills, and interests. It was found that 70 percent of hobbies began in the home; 10 percent in school; 4 percent in camp settings; and 2.5 percent in clubs, churches, and playgrounds.

Other investigators have focused on a variety of aspects of leisure-time choice. A study of college women (Flynn, 1972) that examined the relationship between participation in physical recreation activities and undesirable behaviors (e.g., drugs, curfew violations) revealed that violators did not participate regularly and actively in physical education classes, and that when they did, it took the form of individual or paired activities. Thomas (1932) found that for young people to change to wholesome, satisfying recreational activities enhanced their self-image and interactions with society, and that such behavior change transferred from leisure to other aspects of life.

Schmitz-Scherer and Strodel (1971) conducted a longitudinal study relating to the influence of societally-approved sex roles on leisure choice. The findings showed that sex appears to be an important determinant of leisure time activity; that social variables, personality traits, and health are stronger determinants of leisure time activity than age; that differences in use of leisure time are established early in life; and that 90 percent of people's leisure time activities is structured before age 19.

Goodman (1969) attempted to relate occupation and personal time use of adults to childhood determinants. Results showed that self-direction is similar in work and leisure pursuits, that a climate of parent/child acceptance led to professions and autonomous use of time, and a climate of parent/child demand led to organized use of time.

The creative use of leisure time early in life appears also to have considerable bearing on health, longevity, and creative leisure time use in later life, as shown by a 12-year study of aging conducted by Dawson and Baller (1972). Findings of the study also indicated that development of the habit of using leisure time creatively contributes to satisfactory adjustment in retirement years. Satisfying leisure time involvement seems to be an important aspect of personality and psychological adjustment as well. Brooks and Elliot's (1971) longitudinal study indicated that leisure time activities in childhood may be more predictive of psychological adjustment at age 30 than personality traits, and that early involvement in leisure activities is essential for continued involvement.

We may conclude from the research evidence to date that identifying positive, enhancing leisure time pursuits can make an important contribution to our mental and physical health, our personality, our socialization skills, and our adjustment in later years to a nonwork role. It also appears that the home and family are a highly significant influence on our choice of leisure activities and our attitudes toward leisure itself.

Program Considerations

Because leisure counseling is still an evolving form of service, we have relatively little data to indicate who should be providing the coun-

seling and what are the most effective procedures to use. Leisure counseling services in the past have been primarily restricted to special groups--jail inmates, handicapped individuals, juvenile delinquents, high school students, senior citizens. Few programs have been oriented to the public at large. Dramatic changes are occurring in the leisure counseling picture, however, as the escalating need for leisure counseling services causes educational institutions and community agencies either to incorporate a leisure counseling component into ongoing programs or to develop a service geared specifically to this issue.

It is understandable that at the threshold of a new discipline we are still experimenting with goals, desired outcomes, and workable strategies. A few leisure counseling models have been developed (McDowell, 1976; Overs, 1970), but most leisure counseling approaches in use today are adaptations of those developed for other purposes and only a very few programs can claim to be systematically planned or competency-based, or to have accurate assessment instrumentation. The suggestions that follow, therefore, reflect more what is currently being done and what appears to "work" rather than clear guidelines for the establishment of leisure counseling services based on validated theory and practice.

Regardless of setting, client group, or individual counselor orientation, the major goals of leisure counseling programs appear to be very similar:

- to enchance self-awareness and self-understanding
- to identify personal attitudes, feelings, and values regarding leisure
- to develop or hone decision-making skills in regard to leisure
- to increase personal satisfaction in leisure activities
- to enhance enjoyment of living
- to acquaint individuals with availability of leisure activities and resources in their community
- to expand the personal range of interests and develop new leisure skills

The mode of delivery of leisure counseling services varies from a single individual counseling session to highly structured workshops lasting

from a half-day to 2-3 hours per week for a number of weeks. All program developers agree that for group counseling the number of members should not exceed fifteen if all are to receive individual attention and gain personal satisfaction from the experience. Times and frequency of individual or group sessions are at the discretion of the counselor and are based on client need and availability. Content in most programs includes interest and skill identification, decision-making activities, time studies, information about available resources, and some outside reading.

Client needs vary widely enough among the desired outcomes presented above that a beginning step in program development must be an attempt to determine what it is that a specific individual hopes to achieve from the counseling process. Once needs are identified, the counselor can proceed to design appropriate strategies to satisfy those needs. A major block for many individuals, and particularly older individuals who have been inculcated at an early age with the idea that play is nonessential, frivolous, and akin to "goofing off," is a negative attitude toward leisure, a devaluing and lack of understanding regarding the importance of leisure in the happy, fulfilled life. Values clarification exercises are therefore most appropriate in the beginning stages of the leisure counseling process. The book by Simon, Howe, and Kirschenbaum (1972), which offers 79 strategies to help individuals clarify their values, can be most helpful to counselors in this early stage of leisure counseling.

Some leisure counselors utilize various types of tests or questionnaires to ascertain client interests; others depend on personal interviews with each client to determine individual preferences; still others bring out this information through group counseling sessions. Counselors will want to choose specific instruments with care and use them sparingly, as in any other counseling effort with adults. The tests used should be easy to administer and score, with results clients are able to understand and take away with them. Many tests are available now. Some good test sources are the following:

Educational and Industrial Testing Service
P. O. Box 7234, San Diego, CA 92107

The Psychological Corporation, Test Service Division
304 E. 45th Street, New York 10017

Science Research Associates, Inc.
259 East Erie Street, Chicago, IL 60611

A "must" for leisure counselors is to develop a portfolio of activities and referral information and to add to it continually as new materials become available. The resource file should contain comprehensive information on leisure opportunities and facilities in the community, as well as extensive information in the many areas relating to leisure such as hobbies, educational opportunities, cultural activities, entertainment, sports, religious groups, and sources for self-improvement experiences. Many national, state, and county sources of information also provide information or materials that will be useful to the counselor. The purpose, of course, is for counselors to be able to put their hands immediately on as many kinds of needed materials as possible without having to consult outside sources.

Leisure counseling is particularly enjoyable because leisure is for fun, and clients are seeking help in enriching a most pleasurable part of their lives. What counselors do is help them discover leisure time activities that will contribute to the development of their fullest potentials, to their self-understanding and personal growth, and ultimately to a more deeply satisfying total existence.

Counseling Activities

The strategies that follow are ones counselors can use to facilitate this process--with the caution that they should not be used haphazardly but should be thoughtfully adapted to individual counselor style, client need, and a sequenced program of activities leading to predetermined outcomes. For further information, readers may consult the Resources section of this monograph which contains an extensive list of reading material and program activities for leisure counselors.

Imagining

This activity is particularly appropriate for group counseling although it can be used in individual sessions. Clients often come to the counselor feeling hopelessly blocked so far as leisure ideas are concerned. They want to be engaged in leisure that is stimulating and rewarding but they can't break out of their current habits of thinking and acting during non-work time. The purpose of the imagining exercise is to loosen some of people's inhibitions to creative thinking. We suggest that this activity be used in the early stages of leisure counseling as a way of helping clients to expand their range of leisure choices.

Ask participants to close their eyes and recall something that they did or that happened to them, preferably recently, that made them feel absolutely wonderful. Ask them to try to relive the experience, to attempt to recapture their feelings at the time, the setting, the people. Then have them form dyads or triads and share their experiences and feelings with one another. In the discussion they should try to pinpoint the precise characteristics of the experience that made it so rewarding for them. Was it the people? Was it their feelings of _____ or _____? Was it because they were alone? Was it because of the particular time of day? And so on. Anything that they feel contributed to their full enjoyment should be brought to light.

With this clarified information about what brings them pleasure or makes an experience very satisfying for them, they then close their eyes again and imagine an experience they would <u>like</u> to have. In their imagining they are to set no limits--anything goes. They should really try to get into the fantasy experience and live it through their minds. After they have done this, they again share their ideas with each other in the small groups.

All group members now come together and volunteer personal insights they may have gained about what brings them reward and satisfaction, as well as new ideas that came to them from hearing of others' experiences.

In the final part of the activity, participants write down important words or phrases about their personal criteria for achieving satisfaction and pleasure. This list then becomes a reference point as they begin to make choices about new or expanded leisure opportunities.

Constructive Leisure Activity Survey #1*

We have mentioned the use of tests and surveys in leisure counseling. While we believe that they should be used sparingly with adults, they do have their place; and in brief form such instruments can be very valuable in helping clients acquire new ideas and vitalize their thinking about ways to spend leisure time.

Constructive Leisure, a consulting, counseling, and programming firm in Los Angeles, has developed a survey which contains more than 250 ideas for leisure activities classified under five general headings: physical and outdoor activities, social activities and personal satisfaction, arts and craftsmanship, learning, and general welfare. Participants complete the survey by checking one of three columns after each activity: "Tried activity and like it," "Would like to try it," and "No interest at present." Constructive Leisure provides detailed instructions to counselors on how to score the instrument. We would suggest an alternative approach of having each participant do his/her own scoring so as to promote a feeling of ownership in and commitment to the results. (This would also free the counselor to provide assistance for those who might need it.)

Because the list is so exhaustive and well-constructed, we are not attempting to re-invent the wheel by creating one ourselves. We urge counselors who would care to use this instrument to write to the firm at 511 No. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90048, for information and cost.

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*This form is copyrighted.

Resource Resourcefulness

This group activity builds on the shared knowledge of participants regarding sources of leisure information in their community. Every participant will be knowledgeable about some leisure facility or some potential leisure outlet within accessible range that might be of interest to other group members. The key is to bring all of this information together into a form usable by group members as they attempt to implement some of their choices.

Have the participants form groups of five or six and furnish each small group with a telephone book, two or three sheets of newsprint, and a marking pen. Then ask them first to brainstorm together as many leisure facilities as they can think of in their community--as many volunteer organizations, leisure time-oriented classes in some nearby educational institution, sites for outdoor activities, gyms, bowling alleys, groups, clubs, and so on. Within a few minutes each group should come up with a fairly extensive list. When they run out of member-generated resources, they can consult the yellow pages of the telephone book for further ideas. When all the newsprint sheets are collected, ask for volunteers to organize and classify the information; then arrange to have it typed up and duplicated for each person. Each member thus ends up with a comprehensive list of resources that represents the thinking of a large number of adults.

We sometimes like to add spice to the activity by making it a competition between groups. The group with the most resources listed in a predetermined amount of time wins a cupcake (or something).

At the conclusion of the activity group members are usually astonished at how many resources are available, how many really interesting things there are to do right in their own setting.

Following the three activities listed here (and others of the counselor's own choosing), participants will be engaged in combining information about themselves with all of the other information they have received and be ready to make decisions about expanding and enhancing their leisure time activities.

PERSPECTIVES ON ADULT DEVELOPMENT AND ADULT COUNSELING

> *When a much longed-for goal is achieved . . . the glow fades, and we begin to launch fresh plans, to set fresh goals. And as we look back, we see that much of what now appears to us as happiness lay in the struggle . . . . It is for this reason that men sail boats, climb mountains and take on other challenges, including intellectual ones.* (Taylor, 1973, p. 22)

Gestalt is a German word for a total greater than the sum of all the parts. In three years of examining and researching adult counseling and questioning adult counselors, we have developed our own *gestalt*--a special perspective borne of countless observations and myriad inferences regarding the meaning of what we have seen. We cannot trace our perspective to clearly identifiable or logical deductions from these experiences. Rather, our conclusions take the form of cognitive leaps, "aha" insights that have emerged with such potency that we make the leaps confidently even though we are unsure of where we will land. Our inner being tells us that we had to go through all of this experiencing, thinking, and synthesizing before we could reach this point: We are prepared now to say, "This is what we believe; these are things we must attend to; future progress will come from our resolving these issues."

The generalizations to follow distill the essence of our thought and experience regarding both adult development and adult counseling and expand avenues to new ventures. Before we explore new pathways, however, we wish to leave to others a map that reveals our progress so far. Hopefully, our learnings will stimulate others to map their own journey into adult counseling, either to confirm what we have charted or to suggest compass headings that illuminate adult development more than ours do. Whatever we leave is meant to stimulate adventure and discovery rather than define firm principles--we wish to guide, not direct or command.

Professional Pat-ism

Recently we were engaged in a discussion about effective counseling approaches with several different helping specialists--nurses, educators, social workers, counselors. In very eloquent terms, one young woman decried the rigidity apparent in some of the helping professionals that she had observed in her work as a nurse. It appeared that they had learned the stages people experience in reaction to death and dying and were quick to place a client in a particular stage and to explain all of the client's behavior on that basis. In her words, this simplistic and often insensitive diagnosis by the helper led to a mechanistic, non-caring response that frequently infuriated rather than helped the client. The value of the classification scheme was quite obviously for the helper, not the helpee.

In working with adult counselors of many different backgrounds, we have found this to be all too valid an observation. Whether the focus of the counseling be grief, divorce, leisure, or career development, a strong pull appears to exist, especially for inexperienced counselors, to resort to professional pat-ism, to label or categorize a person's current state of development or behavior as a way of demonstrating their professional competence. Diagnosis and classification in the helping services has a speckled past, with countless reams of literature devoted to categorizing human behavior. We have been reasonably successful in showing the relationship between the placement of an individual in a given classification and an effective counseling strategy. Counseling is very different from a field like medicine where there is a relatively clear-cut relationship between a diagnostic category and the appropriate treatment.

It is not so many years since Leona Tyler recommended that counselors ignore test results and other diagnostic information before meeting a client for the first time, stating that knowledge of such data tended to influence the judgments a counselor would make about an individual before the interview. Development of classifications of adult behavior

and models of adult development is still in its infancy. Such attempts at categorization certainly help us to gain a better understanding of the broad sweep of human development and to identify predictable stages in adulthood. Unfortunately, if we adhere to a model too closely in responding to an individual client, we may become blinded to the person's individuality.

Counseling implications. The implications of this problem seem quite clear. We should encourage counselors to broaden and deepen their knowledge of adult development and to learn as much as possible about how most adults react to and deal with predictable transitions or major events in their lives. This will provide a more comprehensive understanding of adulthood in general. Under all circumstances, however, counselors should give precedence to the unique characteristics of the person. We greatly distort the use of the information if we seek to bend an individual's behavior to fit a certain stage or sequence. Developmental models and stage classifications are useful floodlights; they illuminate the area--but illumination is not understanding. True helping can only occur when intelligent, trained counselors use their knowledge and insights to come to understand clients better and from that understanding develop individualized helping interventions.

Becoming Stronger But Feeling Less Sure

"I've never felt more on top of things in my whole life, more able to come to grips with anything that may happen--but I don't tell that to other people because if I do, they just smile and look at me condescendingly." We heard this comment recently from a man in his early 60's. He was describing an experience that occurs to many adults past midlife. What this man and his peers are communicating is a growing sense of personal competency and power but a feeling of less appreciation on the part of others, particularly the young. Some of the middle-aged and elderly are able to deal relatively well with this personal/other dichotomy regarding their abilities and worth. Many, however, take their cue from what they perceive to be the views of others. They begin

to think less of themselves, to feel less worthy as individuals, and experience great inner turmoil from this lack of societal support. Once started, this lessening of a sense of self-worth becomes a pervasive process whereby withdrawal and uncertainty substitute for what used to be quite the opposite kinds of behaviors, and adults become fearful of taking on responsibilities and challenges.

Counseling implications. Nothing is likely to have a more pervasive and negative effect on adults as they grow older than a feeling of decreasing self-worth and self-esteem. At a time when individuals are in a position to exercise their skills and their interests through choice, they experience a generalized discouragement. We think it absolutely essential that counselors help adult clients to understand the developmental aging process and to find avenues by which they can demonstrate their own particular skills and competencies. Left to their own resources, some adults will enter into a gradual decline in which they attempt less, and think less of themselves for doing so, until in their own minds they are as helpless and worthless as the societal stereotype would have them be. Counselors need to design creative experiences that will help such individuals to become newly aware of their personal worth and to plan for a broad array of experiences in life that will reinforce and maintain their self-esteem. Lacking adequate self-esteem, it is very unlikely that adults will find much meaning in anything else that the counselor attempts to do.

Undue Reliance on the Tried and True

"Personal obsolescence is the greatest problem we face," a Human Resources Development manager told us recently. He was referring to the fact that his company could replace outmoded machines with relative ease, and that his real problem was employees who were stagnated, who continued to rely on the knowledge base and skills developed years ago. While this HRD manager was speaking of a condition all too prevalent in the business world, the same comment can be made about adult clients in general.

Patterns of friendship and interpersonal relationships, methods of personal management, and approaches to learning are frequently practiced again and again in the way that they were first learned. Clearly, adults would rather stay with time-worn and familiar patterns of behavior than seek to develop new skills and responses appropriate to new conditions. This attitude is particularly true of individuals who have undergone a major life transition--change in career, loss of a spouse, or an unsettling geographical move.

Counseling implications. What makes life enjoyable for most of us is possession of a repertoire of finely-honed skills. We use these skills every day--on the job, in our relationships with people, at home, in things we do for pleasure. Part of our verve depends upon our exercising these skills in a way that brings personal satisfaction. But to keep both our job skills and our life skills refreshed and revitalized, we must be committed to personal renewal. Counselors need to help adults find ways of renewing themselves through objective-oriented learning experiences. Casual reading and informal pursuance of interests are helpful, but they are not enough. All adults should view learning as a lifelong opportunity and responsibility, and should give serious and continuing attention to updating and acquiring new skills that will bring them feelings of satisfaction and reward.

Learning Life Skills a Priority

We typically distinguish between two types of human skills: (a) technical skills, i.e., those an individual needs to perform effectively in a technical capacity such as mathematical ability for an engineer and knowledge of grammar for a writer; and (b) life skills, i.e., those skills needed to cope adequately with a wide variety of life situations, such as decision-making, problem-solving, conflict resolution, stress management, use of time. Research has clearly shown the importance of life skills to a person's general well-being and occupational success. Yet, interestingly enough, acquisition of life skills is seldom a

subject of concentrated study or instruction. Even individuals who occupy very responsible positions may be deficient in these areas. Lack of well-developed life skills can plague people throughout their lives and deprive them of occupational advancement and personal fulfillment.

Counseling implications. Some counselors have wanted to limit their work to intensive individual counseling, viewing skill-oriented areas such as decision-making, new learning approaches, and life planning as "guidance topics" best left to guidance specialists. Unfortunately, it is this very attitude of focusing on emotional ills rather than developmental skills which has "turned off" some adults in their encounters with counselors.

Many adults are looking for a flexible, resourceful counselor who can assist them in acquiring needed information or learning specific competencies--a "one-stop" service, if you will, whereby one counselor offers assistance in all areas of need. To be worthy of the name, adult counselors need to be broad-based. Counselors who have prepared themselves in the field of life skills find that they operate as facilitators of client learning, helping to clarify objectives, identify resources, review progress. Satisfaction with such skill learning often leads clients to seek more extended relationships with counselors involving other facets of their lives.

An excellent resource to help counselors gain knowledge and expertise in life skills is the set of competency-based staff development modules developed by a consortium of university and state departments in association with the American Institutes for Research under contract with the former Office of Education. Covering 52 different topics, each of these modules contains six to eight hours of performance-based training and can be facilitated by a consultant or by a group of counselors themselves. The Counselor Renewal System, developed by the ERIC Counseling and Personnel Services Clearinghouse, is another inexpensive, comprehensive, and essentially self-instructional package that assists counselors to upgrade their skills in high priority areas, including life skills.

Creative Intervention

We have noted a distinct tendency for adult counselors to adopt a specific approach and to refine it with time and experience, thus becoming very good at some aspects of adult counseling but not at all familiar with others. It is certainly appropriate for counselors to have an area of specialization and to build on their strengths; but we should always remember that effective adult counseling necessitates a broad rather than a narrow range of counseling skills. Participation in some adult groups, e.g., divorce or spouse abuse, that include intimate discussions of their experiences often causes clients to abstain from further group meetings unless the counselor is one who is aware of and skilled in the use of a wide variety of counseling interventions and whose choice of approach is influenced by client need.

Counseling implications. Perhaps more than for any other type of professional helper, adult counselors need continually to expand their repertoire of counseling skills. It is imperative that a sizable portion (10 to 20 percent) of their time be earmarked for renewal and upgrading activities that enable them to learn and grow professionally. Otherwise, they become relatively narrow specialists whose skills are soon outgrown and whose services are no longer adequate for the needs of their clients.

Creating a Support Network

If adults are asked how they have weathered difficult times, invariably they will mention the influence of a person or persons. And if the conversation continues long enough, they will probably reveal that different people played a supportive role at different times for different stressful events. The implication seems clear. The most helpful resource in times of personal difficulty or stress is another person, and who that person is depends on the nature of the problem. The availability of needed support seems to occur as much by chance as by conscious design. Viewed from a larger perspective, what many people create in an informal

and unplanned way is a support network, and the potency of the network is dependent upon the breadth of expertise possessed by the persons who furnish support.

A support person performs several distinct functions. One is certainly a very deep communication of caring and concern that goes beyond mere familiarity or generalized interest--a willingness to "put it on the line" for the individual who is experiencing a problem. The second avenue of assistance is knowledgeability about areas relevant to another's needs and the desire to share that knowledge or expertise. Third, successful supporters seem to be people who are themselves strong and self-directing, whose desire and ability to reach out stems from a humanistic and caring concern rather than a need to induce dependency or a psychological debt on the part of another. Typically, people in support networks gain considerable personal satisfaction from helping others, and the relationship is mutually beneficial, both to the helper and to the person in need.

Counseling implications. It is unlikely that adult counselors are in a position to serve as major members of people's support structures. Certainly they will play a vital role for some individuals at a particular time for a particular problem. More appropriately, however, they can help adults to recognize the need for a support network and to select members for it. If adult counselors themselves have utilized a support group and are conscious of the importance of networking, first-hand knowledge of the experience can be valuable in assisting others to form such a network. This is an unusual role for counselors, but one that can have both immediate and lasting benefit for their clients.

Imaging High Potential Areas

In times of transition, we frequently find ourselves facing a stark new reality and question our ability to cope with change: What will I do? What will it be like? How can I possibly . . .? A major reason for such uncertainty is our inability to gain a viable image of ourselves in

a new situation. "Is there any way to know what it will be like for me before I actually get into it?" is a question frequently asked of counselors. People wish to be assured of the likelihood of success and personal satisfaction regarding alternative courses of action before they embark on them.

A new and interesting approach is the assessment center, where individuals are called upon to demonstrate their skills in a large number of areas. Their performance profiles are then compared with those of people who have been successful in different occupations. Individuals thus acquire knowledge about their ability to manage some of the basic functions of a given occupation as well as their current level of development across a wide spectrum of life skills. Such information can help to corroborate the desirability of tentative plans and decisions. It can also open up new self-images and make people aware of potentialities they had not considered because of lack of direct experience.

Counseling implications. Though in its infancy, the life skills assessment movement is one that offers people the opportunity to measure their present performance and then, with a counselor, to examine the applications and implications of the data. Because the assessment process focuses on present skill levels, it provides a concrete base for identifying new and needed areas of specialized training. Knowing of a potential(s) can strongly motivate a person to do whatever is necessary to translate the image into reality. To make greater use of this promising innovation, counselors themselves need to experience it personally. They need to learn all they can about the assessment process and the kind of data produced, which are both quantitatively and qualitatively different from data obtained from usual testing devices. The assessment center method is not competitive with counseling; rather, it is another counseling method representing a particularly powerful source of self-knowledge and motivation that can be of great help to clients in making appropriate life plans.

Managing Transitions

To many adults change is something to be gotten over with. Like a particularly troublesome time in life--acne in adolescence or finding one's first job--change is temporary and one can look to a very different state of affairs once a few difficulties have been resolved. In truth, however, we seldom experience a time without change and flux. Achieving a constant equilibrium is an illusory goal which, if chased, will only recede into the distance.

Adult counselors often deal with clients who have been unsuccessful in either developing a generalized strategy for dealing with change or coping with a particular kind of transition. Adults should develop the mind-sense that change and transition are continuing and inevitable and that preparing themselves to cope effectively with transitions can make life smoother and more rewarding. Transitions are comprised of both crises and opportunities, and the wise person is one who can maximize the opportunities while minimizing the crises.

Counseling implications. Our experience would suggest that people can best manage difficult transitions by first realizing that they are now experiencing or are about to experience a major change, and second, preparing themselves for it. Prehaps nothing is so helpful to a person as anticipating what the difficult aspects of a transition will be and then imaging and even practicing alternative behaviors required by the change. This enables people not only to manage transitions more effectively but also to acquire more confidence in their general coping skills.

As adult counselors, we can assist individuals to assess more accurately the transitions they are likely to experience, the probable sequence in which they will occur, and the most meaningful and effective actions each individual can take. A particularly useful counselor strategy is to have the adult client develop a kind of profile of his or her typical methods of handling change and transition. This profile

can be a source of valuable discussion regarding the client's natural inclination and disposition toward change, and development of more person-managed and goal-directed behavior.

Building Self-Esteem

All of us seek approval and evidence that we are worthy people. Self-esteem is more like an orchid than a dandelion, sensitive to subtle nuances in the emotional climate and very easily crunched underfoot by unknowing or insensitive people. Some adults have such a poor self-image that they do not feel worthy enough to seek counseling, or that counseling can help anyone as unimportant as they are. People for whom transitions such as divorce, retirement, or unplanned or unwanted career change are particularly traumatic feel especially vulnerable. Irrational beliefs such as "I must be loved by everyone," "I have to be perfect," or "I must do all things well" exist in all of us at one time or another. Trying times bring such self-defeating assertions to the surface, with devastating damage to our egos. By the very act of seeking counseling assistance, some adults feel that they have publicly admitted to inadequacy or incompetence. "If I were really strong," their self-talk suggests, "I would never need a counselor." In such a climate, it is difficult for meaningful counseling to occur.

Counseling implications. The counselor's initial task must be to help clients dispel their self-doubts and uncertainties regarding their personal worth. Adult counselors must be very sensitive to the self-references and self-perceptions that clients bring to the interview. A well-tuned ear will help the counselor to know whether an individual is ready to move into action planning or to receive specific information. Some clients may need to devote time to analyzing their feelings about themselves and considering to what extent these thoughts are the product of unrealistic expectations and/or irrational beliefs. Expressing their feelings about self and the way they have handled previous life experiences can help clients to identify negative self-talk and to develop more

healthy and appropriate responses. Counselor technique in these situations is not nearly as important as genuine caring for the client and commitment to helping the client to find ways of overcoming persisting feelings of unworthiness.

Life Planning

Historians tell us that we can only know the present by knowing and understanding the past. The pragmatist would have us believe that time devoted to anything other than the present is likely to be wasted. The futurist finds importance residing mainly in images of what lies ahead. Theorists all espouse their own part of the whole, and to the extent that they speak for their own bent, they are right. In human terms, we can know ourselves and the options before us only by understanding the past, present, and future, and the relationships among the three. The goal, of course, is to develop a future plan which blends the interaction of what is and what has been with what can be.

All of us, consciously or not, must make decisions about the future we wish to have. In so doing, we need to consider possible, probable, and preferred futures. Possible futures encompass all that we imagine can conceivably occur, an almost limitless array of potential lifestyles and outcomes. Imaging probable futures begins the narrowing process and identifies from among the possible futures those which we believe have the greatest chance of becoming real. Our personal choice from among the probable futures then becomes our preferred future, the future that we would most like to experience.

Different perspectives on our lives--past, present, and future--intermingle randomly in our thoughts. Sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, we are influenced more by one than another. But rarely do we give consistent thought to the implications of each for what we do and what we strive for. Engaging in life planning helps individuals in a conscious and systematic way to review their lives and to put into action terms what they would like the future to be. Given direction,

whatever it is that brings dignity and meaning to life is more likely to be realized. Life planning is also likely to maximize life experiences that hold the greatest personal reward and minimize those that are hurtful to the self and others. Left to happenstance and exigencies of the moment, goals remain only unrealized dreams. Assuming conscious responsibility for clarifying goals and values and making studied decisions which then undergird a major life plan brings a sense of fulfillment and achievement. For all its rewards, however, very few of us either know how or choose to engage in life planning. The counselor can help clients to realize the importance of life planning and to acquire the know-how to master it.

Counseling implications. Life planning has become the subject of innumerable self-growth paperbacks. Their very quantity is testimony to the adult need for assistance in this area, even though many resist becoming involved. Once into the process, however, we have observed that most adults find life planning to be very rewarding, wish they had done it earlier, and make sincere attempts to incorporate it into their daily living. Life planning lends itself well to small, informal seminars in which the counselor acts more as facilitator than as teacher or counselor. Some of the instruments presented in this volume can be very useful in these seminars. We suggest a several-step process beginning with (a) generation of self-data, perhaps using some of the suggested activities; (b) analysis of the data from self-report or assessment instruments in which individuals develop inferences and generalizations about themselves; and (c) a decision-making and action-planning stage in which individuals set goals and design specific, concrete action steps for achieving what they aspire to.

Negotiating Differences

"We just couldn't get it together. We respect and like each other a lot, but we were so far apart on that issue that we never could work it out." Such a comment illustrates a problem of immense magnitude for adults in all walks of life because it reaches into the heart of

relationships with spouse or significant others, with colleagues at work, and with friends. Especially in adulthood, when rates of development, interests, and values vary so widely, people may find that the differences between them have become so large that they are unable to continue their relationship. Oftentimes such differences are borne of some major transition--career change, change in family structure, retirement. Sometimes the conflict has been aggravated by inappropriate use of assertiveness training which leads people to put forth aggressively their own ideas and needs and ignore those of others. If two people are bent upon asserting their own rights and needs, escalation of the conflict is inevitable.

Basic to this whole dimension of interpersonal relationships is the way we deal with conflict, the way we negotiate our differences. Differences between two persons can loom as insuperable obstacles. Both persons may feel that they are right, with neither being prepared to give an inch. If one person is successful in convincing the other that his or her point of view is correct, the other may be left with such a residual hostility that the relationship is soured for a time, if not indefinitely. Being wary of the possibility of alienating others in trying to resolve differences, some people seek to gloss them over. To grin and bear it or try to ignore the difference is a very common way of handling conflict, but active suppression serves no end other than to bury the discord temporarily. Usually the problem will reappear later in another form and with even greater emotion than the disagreement would seem to warrant.

Competence in negotiating differences is assuming increasing importance in all aspects of life. Research on human performance in business and industry reveals that one of the greatest persisting difficulties in management is the inability of managers and employees to negotiate an agreed-upon level of performance to the end that both parties will have similar expectations. In marriage and other significant interpersonal relationships, small differences or seemingly trivial acts can wound deeply and result in emotional fissures which seemingly defy resolution.

Counseling implications. Traditionally counselors working in this area have devoted much time to analyzing with a client the significant emotional clash and helping the person to develop a way of dealing with it. Currently, adult counselors are being more proactive. They still attempt to minimize the emotion and conflict but at the same time help clients to develop a more responsible and problem-solving approach to conflict resolution.

It has been said that it is possible to negotiate anything. Implicit in this statement is the idea that a skillful negotiator can manipulate a situation to his or her advantage. This approach emphasizes the key ingredients of time, information, and power--having enough time to negotiate, being completely and totally informed on the issue under negotiation, and creating a position of power within the negotiations by one's actions. For all of the obvious benefits of such a strategy, a more appropriate counseling approach is to encourage the warring parties to identify those elements in the conflict that are most important to them. Then the goal is to try to come to consensus wherein each party achieves as many of his/her essential priorities as possible--realizing that in all likelihood neither will be able to achieve all that is desired. The result is typically a solution that both parties can live with, even though it may not represent everything that each person would have wanted, a "win-win" situation in which nobody loses.

This brief explanation of negotiation is not intended to suggest that the process is either simple or always successful. Counselors need to be very knowledgeable and informed regarding negotiation and conflict resolution strategies. Helping clients to develop more effective ways of coping with conflict and of negotiation may signal a departure from the traditional, "laid-back," reflective counselor style, but active and successful involvement in this process may be one of the greatest contributions a counselor can make to the life of another adult.

THE SUMMING UP AND THE NEW BEGINNING

After an arduous building task, people like to step back and observe their creation, experiencing pleasure in having finished the task, thinking how they might have done it differently, and feeling satisfied with what they have been able to achieve. That's how we feel as we come to the end of our project on adult counseling. Three "gut-level" generalizations come to mind regarding what we have learned from the entire experience. We offer them at the end with the hope that they will really be a beginning, a stimulus to others to take stock of their own beliefs about adult counseling.

Humanism before professionalism. To be called "professional" is one of the highest accolades a performer can receive. A professional is thoroughly competent, consistently reliable, and at the top level of expertise. Adult counselors strive to be professional, and surely that is an admirable goal. But more important, we believe, is a spontaneous and genuine humanism. The truly reaching out, caring human response has a therapeutic effect that far transcends sheer professionalism. Wide knowledge, expert technique, and research-oriented methodologies gain us status among our colleagues, but their impact on adults is questionable. As counselors we face the special challenge of trying to overcome all that would prevent one human being from reaching out to another and assisting the other to be more the person he or she wants to be. We are responsible for our own thoughts and actions, and let us never say that our professionalism kept us from being a person, the friend that another human being sought in a time of need.

Substantive eclecticism. A dazzling array of counseling and therapeutic approaches is available to the adult counselor of today. In practice, most of us find a method or two that suits us and settle into a comfortable routine. This identification and continual refinement of

approaches that we feel are appropriate is an important source of professional improvement. But until we clearly explicate what we do and observe ourselves through our third eye, we are not likely to develop into the highly skilled craftpersons required by our profession. Opportunism or latching on to any flighty choice that is currently the fad is to be totally condemned. But there is a higher level of eclecticism, a judicious picking and choosing of methods of healing, that will extend our power and enhance our capacity to respond to each unique adult as a total person. Selective examining and questioning, and a constant search for assurance that our methods are substantive, should be a basic norm of our behavior. We must be ever renewing of our skills, reaching out to find new avenues of responding to a troubled human condition. There must exist within us a restlessness, a dissatisfaction with what we do, and a gnawing demand to grow and become more than we now are. If we combine our conceptual knowledge with the insights that come to us from our daily practice, we will be able to develop a personalized counseling synergism that will enhance our ability to be therapeutic and helping tools for serving others.

Adult counseling has long existed in the wings of the theater of adult life, awaiting its call for a major performance on the human stage. Limited resources, fuzzy conceptualization, and a sparse knowledge base have all acted to limit the spread and the effectiveness of adult counseling. As we write this in the beginning of 1982, it appears that the support base for adult education in general and adult counseling in particular will at best experience a creeping erosion during the next decade. And at worst, adult counseling, along with all of the human services, will undergo drastic reductions, with only a skeleton of the movement remaining. With either scenario, it behooves us to redirect our thinking from an expansionist viewpoint to a more judicious focus on priorities. We must emphasize counselor functions which, devoid of frills and nonessentials, can continue to impact with potency upon adult clients.

We believe that the most critical function of contemporary adult counselors is to be a catalytic force in the lives of clients. Theirs is the unique role of both directing and fueling the latent forces for personal enhancement present within each individual. The adult experience for many is rife with frustration, conflict, and self-negation, forces that limit growth and movement. The counselor must become a partner with the adult client in the quest to release internal counteracting growth forces which negative experiences have strapped. Together the counselor and client can sculpt a future image which dramatizes opportunities, clarifies risks, and emboldens action. If counselors cannot always be physically at the side of the client on this journey into self, they nonetheless, by their commitment and caring, enter into the individual's life space. The adult experience then becomes one of personal enhancement because the client and counselor have together mobilized the best within the individual to unleash internal forces for growth and build behaviors for overcoming external barriers. In the quest for an enhanced life experience, the counselor as partner is a vital client force for belief in self, incisive decision-making, and bold action.

RESOURCES

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